Advice to the Young:

OR, THE

REASONABLENESS

AND

ADVANTAGES

OF AN

Early Conversion to GOD

DEMONSTRATED,

In Three DISCOURSES

On *Ecclesiastes* xii. 1.

By JOSEPH STENNETT.

MICAH vii. 1.

-----My Soul desired the first-ripe Fruit.

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TO THE READER.

THE following Sermons were preached above a Year ago to a Congregation in London, *and ſince tranſcrib'd partly from ſome brief* Notes *I had reſerv'd in my Study, and partly from the Prints of ſome remaining* Ideas *not quite worn off my Memory; while new Occurring Meditations (here and there interſpers'd) ſupplied the place of thoſe which Time and other Thoughts had effac'd.*

This was done to gratify a worthy Friend, *who as he was not diſpleas'd in hearing them, ſo was deſirous to read 'em too: And after that, would not be denied the Liberty of making 'em publick.*

I hope it will not be thought that I have treated on God's Relation to Man as his Creator, *in the firſt Sermon, after a manner too abſtracted and* Philoſophical *for a practical Diſcourſe, when 'tis conſidered that we live in an Age wherein ſome Men will hearken to no other kind of Arguments; and wherein the Minds of others can't be*

too well fortified against the Contagion of Atheism; *especially seeing I have taken up but a few Pages in pursuing that Vein of reasoning, the greatest part of which has been added in transcribing.*

What is advanc'd in these Discourses I have labour'd to sustain both by Scripture *and* Reason; *and endeavour'd to speak to the* Understandings *as well as to the* Affections *of my* Auditors, *and now of my* Readers.

Those who apply themselves with seriousness and attention to the reading *of them, (I hope) will not think their Time and Labour entirely lost: I'm sure I shall not repent mine in* composing *'em, if it shall please God to make 'em the means of* converting *one* Sinner from the error of his Way; *and so* of saving a Soul from Death, and of hiding a multitude of Sins. *To which great End that they may succeed, I humbly commit 'em to the Guidance of his* Providence, *and to the Conduct of his* Spirit, *with my earnest Wishes and Prayers.*

Jam. 5.20.

J. S.

ERRATA.

P. 32. l. 1. f. *the* r. *that*. p. 67. marg. r. בתרותין. p. 113. marg. f. *wrote* r. *written*. p. 126. l. 8. r. *Tabernacles*; l. 10. f. *it* r. *them*.

THE

THE *Reaſonableneſs & Advantages* OF AN Early Converſion to God DEMONSTRATED.

SERMON I.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the Evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.

HOW much ſoever the Thoughts of Youth are buſied with the amuſing Entertainment of the many ſenſible Objects that accoſt 'em, and thereby render'd unapt for

ſerious Reflections on the Vanity of the World, and on the Excellency and Happineſs of a Spiritual and Heavenly Converſation: Yet one would think, when *Reaſon*, *Experience* and *Religion*, all conſpire to beſpeak their Attention, (as they do in our Text, and indeed in this whole Book) it might reaſonably be expected that many would have the Juſtice or Prudence, or at leaſt the Curioſity, to give three ſuch Monitors a hearing.

When a Prince excelling all other Men in Wiſdom, and other Monarchs in Wealth and Splendor, has ſo much Cha-
Eccl. 1. 1. rity for Mankind as to turn a *Preacher*; Who would not be ambitious to become his *Auditor*? The News of his Wiſdom
1 King. 10. and Grandeur drew the Queen of *Sheba from the utmoſt parts of the Earth*, to become an immediate and admiring Witneſs of what ſhe had before, at a diſtance, and but imperfectly heard (Fame it ſelf, which uſes ſo mightily to inhance the Glory of other Princes, having, it ſeems, detracted from his, which ſo far exceeded the common Standard, that its Luſtre was leſſen'd by thoſe *Encomiums* which might have been juſtly counted ſtrain'd *Hyperboles*, when applied to others.)

Who

Who would not then, at leaſt, ſo far imitate that Generous Princeſs, as to recollect his roving Thoughts *from the ends of the Earth*, whither they are prone to wander, to fix them on a Subject, which the Great and Wiſe *Solomon* recommends to Youth with the greateſt Advantage of Reaſon, and Strength of Argument? Curioſity (if no other Conſideration ſhould) would undoubtedly prompt many to deſire, with the *Queen of the South*, to hear his Wiſe Speeches, (if he were now alive) and to undergo the Charge and Fatigue of a long Journey to that end. Ought we not then to put a High Value on his Writings, wherein we have that very Senſe, which ſo much aſtoniſhed his Hearers, when he ſpake to them; and *by which* (as 'tis ſaid of *Abel*) *being Dead, he yet ſpeaks to us?* Heb. 11.4. Nor have we need to traverſe the Mighty Waters to hear him, or to ſay (as *Moſes* ſpeaks concerning the Law) *Who ſhall* Deut. 30. *go over the Sea for us, and bring his* 13, 14. *Words to us, that we may hear them and do them?* ſeeing they are ſo very *near* us in the Divine Treatiſes he has written.

And as his extraordinary Knowledg promiſes us much, ſo his large Experience may juſtly raiſe our Expectation ſtill higher.

This makes a Man speak both more feelingly, and with more Demonstration. Besides, 'tis not only the Experience of a Man endow'd with a vast Stock of Wisdom and good Sense, who, consequently, was able to make very curious and exact Remarks on the Event of Things; but of one, who by the Advantage of his elevated Station in the World, and of his Immense Riches, was also capable of furnishing himself with whatever the World could yield, or his large Curiosity desire. And tho it was his great Unhappiness and Sin *to give his Heart to know Madness and Folly*, after that criminal manner he confesses he did: Yet even this may make way for his Advice; since he that here decries a loose and sensual, and commends a strict and vertuous course of Life, is one, who had thorowly try'd what Pleasures the World could afford; and upon a just Estimate pronounces them all, not only *Vanity*, but *Vexation of Spirit*, at the beginning of this Book; and at the latter end of it, from his happier Experience of the Worth and Sweetness of a Religious Life, recommends it as the only way to Happiness. So that since these Thoughts are the Result, not only

Eccles. 2. 4—10.

Eccl. 1. 17. Chap. 2. 1, 3, &c.

Eccl. 12. 13.

only of his Speculation, but of his Experience too, and that an Experience ſo dearly bought, at the Expence of ſo much Thought and Invention, (unhappily employ'd in *making Proviſion for the Fleſh to fulfil the Luſts thereof*) of ſo much Time and Treaſure, and (which is infinitely more) at the Expence of his Innocency and Peace of Conſcience, and this with the great and apparent hazard of his Soul; How much does it behove thoſe that are Young to become Wiſe at his Coſt, and to attend to the Teſtimony of his Experience, as well as to the Evidence of his Reaſon? Rom. 13. 14.

But we have not only the Wiſeſt Man in the World giving us Rules in a matter of the greateſt Weight, and confirming them with the *Probatum eſt* of a very large and long Experience; for, *behold, a Greater than* Solomon *is here.* The *Wiſeſt of Men wrote* this Book; but the *Spirit of Wiſdom inſpired it.* If then all the advantageous Characters of *Solomon* ſhould not much influence the Minds of Young Perſons to regard his Admonitions; yet the Authority of the Holy Spirit himſelf, whoſe Dictates theſe originally are, lays a ſtrict Obligation on them to Mat. 12. 42. 2 Tim. 3. 16.

obſerve 'em, as his own Divine *Counſels*, with a Religious Zeal, and to reſpect 'em as his *Precepts*, with an awful Reverence.

To form in our Minds a juſt Idea of the general Drift and Deſign of this Book, 'tis proper to obſerve, That as 'tis natural for Man to ſeek to be Happy, and therefore the Philoſophers of all Ages, and of all Nations, have given Rules according to their Senſe of Things, for the obtaining this great End; We have *Solomon* (a very Philoſophical Prince, and who of all others deſerves beſt to be term'd *the Prince of Philoſophers)* giving in this Book the Hiſtory of himſelf, with reſpect to the Method he took in the purſuit of Happineſs; recounting to us his falſe Steps for our warning; and at laſt making both the End and Duty, and Intereſt of Man, to conſiſt in the Service and Fear of God: All which ſeems to be compriz'd in the Cloſe of this Book, in thoſe Words, *Let us hear the Concluſion of the whole Matter, Fear God, and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole Duty of Man:* (For if we leave out the word [*Duty*] which is not found in the Original,

Chap. 12. ver. 13.

nal, more Scope is given to the Words, [*This is the whole of Man*] *q. d.* his whole Duty, End and Intereſt.) And while he is looking back with Regret on the Loſs of his own Time, and with a Penitential Sorrow reflects on the Sins of his Youth, he earneſtly admoniſhes others to beware in Time of the Rock on which he ſplit, to be warn'd of taking a *wrong* Courſe by his Fall, to be perſwaded to take a *right* one by his Repentance; and, as an excellent Mean conducing to both their preſent and future Happineſs, to devote themſelves, as ſoon as poſſible, to the Service of God, or (in the Words of our Text) to *Remember their Creator in the Days of their Youth.*

For our better underſtanding of which Words, Order directs us to take notice of thoſe in the two laſt Verſes of the foregoing Chapter, on which they have an immediate Dependance; where the Wiſe Man ſeems to obviate an Objection, which ſome, eſpecially thoſe whoſe youthful Heat prompts 'em to purſue the Pleaſures of the World, would raiſe againſt his paſt Diſcourſe, which ſo much depretiates 'em: If ſuch ſhould ſay, his Morals are too ſevere, he anſwers them, Chap. 11.

v. 9. *Rejoice, O Young Man in thy Youth, and let thy Heart chear thee in the Days of thy Youth; and walk in the ways of thy Heart, and in the sight of thine Eyes:* Which (according to some) is a Concession of a moderate use of Worldly Pleasures, and may be thus paraphras'd. "Imagine not (O Young Man) that I pretend to make it a Crime for thee to be "Chearful in the use of the good Things "of this Life, which the Providence of "God allots thee: No —— Gratify the "Desires of thy Heart, and entertain "thy Eyes and other Senses with variety "of pleasant Objects, provided a due "Moderation be observ'd in all these
1 Cor. 7. 31. "Things, so that thou *use, and not abuse 'em*; for an Account of thy Management of them must be render'd "before the just Tribunal of the Almighty: I do not bid thee renounce the Joys "and Comforts of this Life, [*But know thou, that for all these Things God will bring thee into Judgment.*] "I therefore "caution thee of the Danger of being "insnar'd by an Inordinate Desire of "them.

Others interpret these Words as an *Ironical Permission*, whereby the Absurdity of

of the wild Maxims, and extravagant Sayings, with which Young Perſons are wont to encourage themſelves and others to perſiſt in a vicious Courſe, are expos'd; and a ſerious Caution thereupon ſubjoin'd. "Youth (ſay they) is the Time of Life "moſt fitted for Pleaſure and Joy, the Sen- "ſes are then moſt lively and impreſſible; "and as a multitude of charming Objects "are continually inviting us, ſo our own "Inclinations are prompting us to em- "brace 'em. Now therefore is the Time "for us to abandon our Selves to Mirth "and Pleaſure. Well (ſays *Solomon*) *Re- joice, O Young Man*, &c. *q. d.* "Take thy "own Courſe, give up thy ſelf to the "Conduct of thy beloved Luſts, take thy "fill of Jollity and Pleaſure; but mark "the Conſequence, be aſſur'd that for "this Courſe of Life (if obſtinately per- "ſiſted in) the Great and Juſt God will "Judg and Condemn thee to Eternal "Pains, [*Know thou, that for all theſe Things God will bring thee into Judgment.*]

Which laſt Senſe ſeems to me moſt Genuine, not only becauſe we have ſeve- ral Examples of this Ironical way of ſpeaking in the Holy Scripture; as that Saying of our Bleſſed Saviour to his Diſ- ciples

Mat. 26. 45. ciples [*Sleep on now, and take your reſt*] ſeems to be, both from the Reproof for
v. 40, 41. Sleeping, and Exhortation to Watchfulneſs, which he had given 'em juſt before; and from the Alarm he gives 'em, not to indulge their Drowſineſs, but to *riſe and*
v. 45, 46. *be going*, (for the Reaſon he aſſigns) juſt after thoſe Words: And that of the
1 Kings 22. 15. Prophet *Micajah* to King *Ahab*, who enquir'd of him, whether he ſhould go up againſt *Ramoth-Gilead*, [*Go and proſ-*
v. 12. *per*, &c.] whereby he aſſumes the Language of the falſe Prophets; but afterwards explains himſelf in expreſs Terms
v. 17, 18. [*If thou return at all in Peace, the Lord hath*
See alſo 1 Kings 18. 27. *not ſpoken by me.*] Not only do ſuch Ex-
Ezek. 28. 3, 4. amples as theſe (I ſay) juſtify this Senſe of the Words laſt given; but that which ſeems eſpecially to make it preferable to the former is, that thoſe Phraſes, in the Sentence we are examining, of [*Walking in the way of one's Heart, and in the ſight of one's Eyes*] can't be eaſily accommodated to a moderate uſe of Worldly Enjoyments, (as the former Senſe ſuppoſes) ſeeing 'tis evident, they are uſed to quite another purpoſe in the Scripture, by that
Num. 15. 39. Prohibition God gave the *Iſraelites* [*not to ſeek after their own Heart, and their own*

Eyes]

Eyes] and by the Curſe *Job* imprecates on himſelf, [*if his Heart had walked after his Eyes*] Both which ſhew, that *to walk after one's Heart and Eyes*, is an Expreſſion more fairly applicable to a Diſſolute and Sinful Courſe of Life, than to a Temperate uſe of Lawful Pleaſures. Job 31. 7.

After this Ironical Permiſſion of Sinful Pleaſures, and the *ſerious Premonition* of Judgment ſubjoin'd to it, follows a *Concluſion* in theſe Terms, *Therefore remove Sorrow from thy Heart, and put away Evil from thy Fleſh; for Childhood and Youth are Vanity.* Eccl. 11. 10.

Which ſome will have to be a Continuation of the *Irony*, and, if taken in a proper Senſe, to ſpeak the Language of thoſe *Libertines*, who notwithſtanding what he had before ſaid, would ſtill devote themſelves to the Pleaſures of Sin. As if he ſhould ſay, " Caſt away (as " you reſolve to do) all ſerious Thoughts; " Fly the Occaſions of Trouble and Sorrow, as much as poſſible; avoid what- " ever is ungrateful to Fleſh and Blood: " for Time is fleeting; *Childhood and* " *Youth*, thoſe Opportunities of Delight " and Pleaſure, will ſoon *vaniſh*, there- " fore the Sweets they afford muſt be " reap'd

" reap'd in their Seaſon. For thus do ſome Senſualiſts argue, for the preſent and earneſt purſuit of Worldly Pleaſures, from their *Vanity* in reſpect of the *ſhortneſs* of their Continuance, which ought rather (when their *Eternal* Ill Conſequences are conſider'd) to take off the edg of the Appetite toward 'em. So the Prophet, and after him the Apoſtle introduces them arguing; *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we ſhall die.*

Iſa. 22. 13. 1 Cor. 15. 32.

But it ſeems not ſo likely that the Irony ſhould be reiterated after ſo expreſs and ſerious a warning of Judgment, as that in the former Verſe, eſpecially ſeeing this is join'd to it by a [*Therefore*], as a Concluſion founded thereupon, [*Therefore remove Sorrow from thy Heart*, &c.]

I ſhould rather therefore give the Words ſuch a Turn as this, *viz. Seeing God will bring thee to Judgment, therefore, Remove Sorrow*, &c. *q. d.* " Mix " Innocency with thy Joy; be Merry " and Wiſe; Reform thy Life, and a " *good Conſcience* ſhall be to thee *a continual Feaſt.* The Evil of Sorrow " need not poſſeſs thy Heart, if the Evil " of Sin be extirpated from thy Fleſh: " Govern thy Body with Temperance " and

Prov. 15. 15. טוב לב

" and Chastity, and Joy shall reign in " thy Soul.

Or (as others will have it) *Remove Anger from thy Heart*, (for so the Word, here translated Sorrow, properly signifies) *q. d.* " Be not angry, with them " that advise thee well, or, be not dis- " pleas'd with God for the strictness of " his *Precepts*, which I recommend to " thee, or for the Severity of his *Judg-* " *ments* of which I warn thee. כעס

Or else the Passion of Anger, because it so violently agitates the Soul, may be put for all the vitious Affections of the Mind, and then the meaning of the Words is; *Remove all sinful Passions from thy Mind: And put away Evil from thy Flesh*; q. d. " *Give not the Members of thy Body to the* " *Service of Sin.* Rom. 6. 19.

Which Exhortation is urg'd by this Reason [*For Childhood and Youth are Vanity*] *q. d.* " These Pleasures, thou art so " hotly in chase of now, will vanish and " disappear together with thy Youth, " which is a Flower that soon fades; " and why shouldst thou, for short- " liv'd Joys, expose thy Soul to the " Hazard of Eternal Misery?

Or

Or else the Sense of the Wise Man may be to this purpose; "I have reason to "admonish those that are Young, of the "Evil and Danger of a Sensual Life, be-"cause none are so prone to be insnar'd "by its Charms as they, whose Imagi-"nations, Words and Actions are gene-"rally so vain, that they may be fitly "term'd *Vanity* it self, *Vanity* in the "Abstract; [*For Childhood and Youth are* "*Vanity.*]

Upon which he adds a suitable Exhortation to such, in the Words of our Text, which are connected to those above with a Particle, which in our Translation is וזכור render'd [*Now*], but is no Adverb of Time, but commonly signifies [*And*], and so may be join'd to what he had advis'd before, *viz.* ---- *Put away Evil from thy Flesh, and Remember thy Creator*; putting this Sentence (*For Childhood and Youth are Vanity*) in a Parenthesis between those two Instructions. Or else it may be render'd [*Then*] or [*Therefore*], and so is an Inference from the *Premises*; q.d. "If there is a Time of *Judgment* to be "expected, and *Childhood and Youth* "*are Vanity*, *then* it concerns such to "*Remember their Creator*, &c.

In

In which Words we have Three Things to conſider.

Firſt, A *Duty* enjoin'd or exhorted to.

Secondly, The *ſpecial Time*, of engaging in the performance of this Duty, preſcrib'd.

Thirdly, The *Reaſons* of it intimated.

I. The *Duty* exhorted to, is [*Remember thy Creator.*]

II. The *ſpecial Time* of engaging in this Duty, is ſignify'd;

1. In expreſs Terms [*In the Days of thy Youth.*]

2. By an oppoſite *Periphraſis*, which contains a Deſcription of Old Age [*while the Evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh, when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no Pleaſure in them*] i. e. before the approach of Old Age.

III. The *Reaſons* hereof are couch'd and inſinuated:

1. In the Terms of the Duty ſet before us, where the *Relation* we ſtand in to

to God, as he is our *Creator*, implies the Obligation we are under, to *Remember* him, and that *in our Youth*.

2. In the Terms us'd to signify the *proper Time* of this Duty; where the fitness of the Season of *Youth* for entering one's Self into the Service of God, and the Disadvantage of deferring it to *Old Age*, are suggested.

Of these we shall treat severally in their Order.

I. To explain the *Duty* to which we are exhorted, we shall consider,

First, The *Object* of it, namely *our Creator*; and we shall endeavour to shew what is included in that Title here attributed to God.

Secondly, The *Act* it self, of *Remembering*, what it imports.

First, We are first to enquire what is included in this Title of *Creator*, here attributed to God.

1. It plainly and expressly declares, that God is the *Author* and *Original* of the *Being* of Man.

And

And may alſo include,

2. That he is the *Upholder and Preſerver* of our Being.

3. That he is the *Reſtorer and Reformer* of Man.

4. That he is the *Sovereign Arbiter and Diſpoſer* of our Being.

1. God is our Creator, as he is the *Original and Author* of our Being: For

(1.) He created the *Matter* of which we are compos'd, as well as that of all the other Parts of the Univerſe. All Beings of which the World conſiſts, all that we have any Notices of either from *Reaſon* or *Scripture*, are either *Spiritual* or *Corporeal*, and all theſe are the Works of God. Now Man is a Creature compounded of both theſe kinds of Being; his Soul is a Spirit, and his Body is a Material Subſtance: And both theſe Conſtituent Parts of Mankind were created by God the Author of the whole Univerſe.

And here we conſider the Term [Create] in its ſtricteſt Senſe, namely, the giving a *Being* to that which had none before, the producing of Something out of Nothing, *i. e.* without any preexiſtent Matter to work upon.

Now it must be granted that the Soul and Body of Man, either are from Eternity, or else had a Beginning in Time; and if they had a Beginning, that it must be either from themselves, or from some other Being inferiour to God, or from God himself.

I shall therefore briefly prove, both from Reason and Scripture, that they are not Eternal, but had a Beginning; and this not of themselves, nor of any other Being but God himself; as our Text does import, by stiling him our Creator.

1st, Our *Substance* is not from Eternity: There is no plausible colour for such a wild Conceit; seeing there are no Characters of Eternity engraven on our Souls, the nobler part of Man; much less are there any Vestiges of it imprinted on that Clay of which our Bodies are composed.

The *Memory* we have of our own Existence, extends but to a very few Years; therefore we can't pretend, that we remember our selves to have been from Eternity: Nor has any Eternal Being *revealed* to us that our Substance is Eternal, tho we knew it not, or had forgotten it. And

is

is it likely that a Being, to which Thinking is eſſential, ſhould have ſo excellent a Property as to exiſt Eternally, and yet labour under ſo great a defect, as the entire Oblivion of its own Eternal Duration? Is it to be imagin'd that if the Minds of Men had been Eternal, there would have been any room left for thoſe many New and Great *Improvements* of Arts and Sciences, which have been ſo often ſeen in the World? How could paſt Eternity be ſo deficient, as to leave any thing to future Invention to diſcover or cultivate? Is it probable that our *Knowledg* even of things much inferiour to our ſelves, would be ſo *inconſiderable* as it is, and that the vileſt Inſect, nay the moſt deſpicable portion of Inanimate Matter, ſhould ſo puzzle the moſt Speculative and Ingenious Minds, that enquire into their Nature, if thoſe Minds were from Eternity? Is it not much more reaſonable to conclude, that *We are but of Yeſterday, becauſe we know nothing?* And can it be thought that a Being that wanted no Cauſe for its *Exiſtence*, ſhould need a Cauſe to give it *Properties* far below that of *Eternity?* That a Being which can't be meaſured by

Job 8. 9.

Time, should yet be liable to so many *Changes* and *Troubles*, as we see the Souls of Men are continually expos'd to?

And if the *Soul* can't justly claim this Property, how can the *Body*, which consists of dull unactive Matter, and wants those lesser Qualities which the Soul possesses, be imagin'd to have that greater Excellency of Eternity, which the Soul her self can't reasonably pretend to?

No --- This is the Divine Prerogative, and is not to be attributed to any other Being than the Supreme; who calls himself, *I AM, i.e.* Being in the Abstract, Being it self, and *JEHOVAH, i.e.* The Eternal One; *who only hath Immortality* in this Absolute Sense, and of whom alone it can be said, *He is from Everlasting to Everlasting.*

Exod. 3. 14.
1 Tim. 6. 16.
Psal. 90. 2.
Isa. 63. 16.

For what is Eternal is Infinite and Independent. Infinite in *Duration*; for that which had no Cause to produce it does necessarily exist; and that which necessarily Exists is infinitely Durable, and *Independent* by the same Reason: And that which is Independent, and Infinite in Duration, may be justly accounted Infinite

finite in all other Reſpects, and ſo *Infinitely Perfect*; which is the ſole Prerogative of God, and Incommunicable to any Being inferiour to him.

It therefore follows, that we had once no Being; that our Souls and Bodies, as well as all other Beings (except God) had a Beginning.

And if we had a Beginning,

2dly, *We could not be the Authors of our own Being*; we could not give our ſelves a Being before we had a Being. Nothing can be thought on more abſurd; than that Nothing, which can't act in any ſenſe, ſhould be capable of Creating. That *Nothing is made of Nothing*, if taken in this ſenſe, is a true Maxim, *viz.* That Nothing can make its No-ſelf to Be: But is not to be conſtrued ſo as to exempt God, whoſe Power is Infinite, from being able to make a Being, which did not Exiſt before. And *Ex nihilo nihil fit.*

3dly, *No other Being* (except God) *could make us, or any thing elſe, out of Nothing:* For how can leſs than an Infinite Power tranſport any thing from Nullity to Exiſtence, ſeeing there is an infinite diſtance betwixt them? As appears, in

that, if you *multiply* Nothing to Infinity, it will never amount to any real Being; and if you in thought *diminish* any thing that exists to the lowest degree of Being imaginable, you can never make it appear a mere Nothing? This Distance therefore being Infinite, it must needs be proper only to an Infinite Power, to make that Exist which is not yet in being; as it must needs be only the *withdrawment* of that Power from supporting the Being of a Creature, that can annihilate it.

Besides, if no Being, that has had a Beginning, could give it self Existence, and all things inferiour to God, had a Beginning, (as we have prov'd) Then no Being inferiour to him could make us Exist; for how should that, which does neither *necessarily* Exist, nor could *give it self a being*, be capable of giving being to any thing else, when it wholly depends on God for its own?

And as *Being* simply consider'd is the most Universal *Effect*, all Creatures partaking of it in common; it must be owing to the most Universal *Cause*, which is no other than God himself: Therefore he only can Create, or make that to be which was not before,

Nor

Nor have we only the Light of *Reaſon* in this Caſe; but that of Divine *Revelation* too, which aſſures us, that *In the Beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth*, i. e. the whole Univerſe. He made the firſt Matter, out of which this Curious Fabrick was built; he made the Earth, which was without form and void; and then raiſed a beautiful Structure out of it. *Through Faith* (as well as Reaſon) *we underſtand that the Worlds were fram'd by the Word of God, ſo that things which are ſeen, were not made of things which do appear.* Gen. 1. 1. Ver. 2. Heb. 11. 3.

(2.) As God is the Author of the *Matter* of which we conſiſt: So is He alſo of our *Form* and Compoſition (as well as of that of the reſt of the Univerſe.) It was a vain Suppoſition of *Ariſtotle*, that this Frame of the World had no Beginning, and conſequently that the *Species* of Mankind has exiſted from Eternity. This Fancy has been ſufficiently diſprov'd by the reaſons before alledg'd againſt the Eternity of the firſt Matter of the World; for if That be not Eternal, much leſs can the Form of it be ſo.

Nor is the *Epicurean* Whimſey leſs Abſurd, which ſuppoſes, that from a

fortuitous shuffling of an Infinite Number of self-existent, and self-moving *Atoms*, this stately Frame of the World did emerge, and that Mankind, and all other Animals, sprung out of the Earth by such a *Casual* way of Generation as this. As if Dead Matter could move it self, and as if the Collision of Material Particles could produce a Substance capable of *Reasoning* and *Judging*, *Willing* and *Desiring*, such as the Soul of Man is. And what can be more absurd than to imagine, that the Accidental Motions of those minute Particles could frame the Curious Structure of a humane Body; nay the whole System of the Universe, and every Species in it? 'Tis less unreasonable to imagine, when one sees a Magnificent Palace, that it was built by the *Casual* jumbling together of the Materials that compose it; or that the most curious Watch was fram'd after this odd manner; that an elegant Picture may have resulted from the *Accidental* and unheeded mixture of Colours; or an Elaborate Oration or Poem (as many have observ'd) from a *Confus'd* shuffling of the Letters of the *Alphabet*.

'Tis

'Tis evident from the *harmonious* Combination of the several Parts of the World, and the curious frame of each *Species* in it, and particularly of Mankind, that all has been dispos'd in *Number*, *Weight* and *Measure*, by the Infinite Wisdom and Power of that God, who is *Wonderful in Counsel, and Excellent in Working.* Isai. 28. 29.

And this Truth is so very clear, that the Minds of the generality of the Heathens themselves have been penetrated with the Light of it. And therefore the Apostle *Paul* cites to the *Athenians* one of their Celebrated Authors, to prove, (what others of them generally confess'd) that God is the *Original Author of Mankind.* So that 'tis manifest from Reason that God has form'd us. Act. 17. 28. τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν. Aratus.

And this the Sacred Historian of the Creation expressly asserts,--- *God said, Let us make Man in our Image, after our Likeness, so God created Man in his own Image; in the Image of God created he him: Male and Female created he them.* And again--- *The* LORD *God formed Man of the Dust of the Ground, and breathed into his Nostrils the Breath of Life, and Man became a living Soul.* 'Tis God (who is *the Former of all things)* that *hath made us, and not we* Gen. 1. 26, 27. Gen. 2. 7. Jer. 10. 16. Psal. 100. 3.

we our selves. He both made the *Matter* of which we consist, and moulded it into that *Form* which we bear, and by which our *Species* is distinguished from those of other Creatures.

(3.) God is our Creator, or the Author of our Being, in that, as he has fram'd the *Species* of Mankind in General; so he is the Former of every *Individual* Humane Creature that comes into the World. The Multiplication of Creatures according to their kind by Natural Propagation, is a Blessing of God
Gen. 1. pronounc'd on them at their Creation. But this way ordain'd by God for the *Conservation and Increase* of each *Species* is very Mysterious and Wonderful, and is in the Scripture term'd Creation, and attributed to God as such. The Psalmist calls the Generation to come, *the People*
Psal. 102. 18. *that shall be Created*; And speaking of the successive Dissolution and Propagation of
Psal. 104. 29, 30. Animals, he says, — *Thou takest away their Breath, they die, and return to their Dust. Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and Thou renewest the face of the Earth.* Here the Term of Creation is used to signify the Conservation and Multiplication of Animals in the ordinary Course

Courſe of Nature; and that (as well as the firſt formation of each *Species*) is aſcribed to the Spirit of God. And God threatens the *Ammonites* by the Prophet *Ezekiel*, to judg them *in the Place where they were Created*, that is, as he explains it in the next Words, *in the Land of their Nativity*. Gen. 1. 2. Ezek. 21. 30.

And God is the Creator in this reſpect, in a ſenſe beyond what is ordinarily imagin'd. For it has in vain been attempted by Men to explain the Formation of *Plants* and *Animals*, by the Natural Laws of *Motion*: And ſo many inſuperable Difficulties meet 'em, when they would ſhew how their Organs are *Mechanically* form'd in Natural Generation, that they appear impoſſible to be ſolv'd without attributing to an Almighty Power the Formation of every *Individual* Creature (as well as of every *Species*) and that in a way more *Immediate*, at leaſt more *Myſterious* than is commonly ſuppoſed.

Nor does the Conjecture of the *Equivocal* Generation of ſome *Plants* and *Inſects* (tho' it has generally prevailed in the World as an undoubted Truth) ſeem well founded; ſince that Suppoſition has

Malpigh. de Gallis. Swammerdam de Generat. Insect. Leuwenhoeck. Epistol.

has been of late Years greatly discredited by many Experiments, which render it very improbable, that any Plant is rais'd without Seed by a *formative Power* in the Earth, (as many have pretended) or any Animal *spontaneously* produc'd without Parents. And these God uses only as *Instrumental* or *Occasional* Causes, himself being the *Efficient* Cause of all Generation; who in this respect (as the Apostle says in another) *worketh All in All*; and tho' he finished the Creation in Six days, yet may be said to Create still, or (as our Saviour speaks) *to Work hitherto.*

1 Cor. 12. 6.

John 5. 17.

So that it appears to be a Work proper to the Creator of Man, to form him in the Womb, and that after a Method too mysterious to be trac'd by a humane Understanding; since the Natural *Laws* of *Motion*, at least so far as known by Men, are not capable of producing so Curious a Piece as a humane body: And as it is generally supposed that the Souls of Men are *Individually* form'd, and infus'd into their Bodies by the hand of God, (since no tolerable Account can be otherwise given of their *Production*) so it must be granted, that the form of each Individual

Individual humane Body is to be attributed to the ſame Divine Power; which operates after ſo unſearchable a manner, that every Man may well ſay (not only as to the *Origin* of Mankind in *general*, but as to the *Formation* of himſelf in *particular*) as *Job* did, *Thy Hands have made me, and faſhioned me round about--Thou haſt made me as the Clay:--Haſt thou not pour'd me out as Milk, and crudled me like Cheeſe? Thou haſt clothed me with skin and fleſh; and haſt fenced me with bones and ſinews: Thou haſt granted me Life*, &c. And with the Pſalmiſt, --- *Thou haſt cover'd me in my Mother's Womb. I will praiſe Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvellous are thy Works, and that my Soul knoweth right well. My Subſtance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in Secret; and curiouſly wrought in the loweſt parts of the Earth. Thy Eyes did ſee my Subſtance yet being imperfect, and in thy Book all my Members were written, which in Continuance were faſhion'd, when as yet there was none of them.* Job. 10. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. Pſal. 139. 13, 14, 15, 16.

2. It hence follows, that God is the *Upholder* and *Preſerver* of our Being. For this is included in the term [Creator]. When God by the Prophet addreſſes himſelf

himself to the *Israelites*, to encourage them to trust in him for their Preservation, and to dissipate their fears of Danger, he speaks to them under this Title; —

Isai. 43. 1. *Thus saith the Lord, that created Thee, O* Jacob, *and he that formed Thee, O* Israel, *Fear not*, &c. And to this Exhortation he adds a Promise to preserve 'em when surrounded with the greatest Difficulties, to be with them in passing through the Water, and through the Fire: And the Psalmist makes the *Relation* he stood in to God, as his *Creature*, a plea for his *Preservation*, when he says in his

Psal. 138. 8. Prayer — *O LORD — forsake not the Works of thy own hands.*

And the Apostle *Peter* exhorts those

1 Pet. 4. 19. that are persecuted, to *commit the keeping of their Souls to God, in well doing, as to a faithful Creator*: So that from hence 'tis evident, that the Relation God bears to us as our Creator, includes his Providential Care for our Preservation: That God who is our *Maker*, is also *the*

Job 7. 20. *Preserver of Men.* As it was impossible that we should *give* Being to our selves; so 'tis beyond our power to *continue* our selves in Being: And as we owe not our *Existence* to any Being Inferiour to God;

so

ſo neither does the *Duration* of our Being depend upon any other than him. It was the Will of God that *produc'd* us, conſequently 'tis the ſame Will that *preſerves* us. Before he *actually will'd* our Production, we could not *exiſt*; and if he ſhould *ceaſe to will* the Continuance of our Being, it would immediately diſcontinue, and be *annihilated*: 'Tis but for him to withdraw his Hand, to ſuſpend the Influence of his Power, and we ſink into Nothing. So that *we are kept by the Power of God* in regard of our *Natural*, as the Apoſtle affirms we are in reſpect of our *Spiritual* State: And ſince the Divine Will is equally the Cauſe of our *Being*, and of the *Duration* of it; the term of Creator attributed to God in our Text, may be fitly extended to both; our Preſervation being a Continuation of God's Creating Work: for in *this* reſpect (as well as *that* mention'd before of the formation of ſucceſſive Generations of Men) according to the words of Chriſt, God *worketh hitherto*. And as from him our Being is deriv'd; ſo *in him* alone *we Live, and Move, and have our Being* ſtill; who *upholds all things by the Word of his Power*. And not only We, but all other Creatures

1 Pet. 1. 5.

John 5. 17. Act. 17. 28.

Heb. 1. 3.

tures lean on ~~the~~ Almighty Hand for their *Preservation*, to which they all equally owe their *Existence*.

3. The Term [Creator] may further include that God is the *Restorer and Reformer of Man*. 'Tis true it does not necessarily follow, that, because he has made, and preserves us, therefore, after we had undone our selves by Sin, and effac'd the Image of Holiness he impress'd on us in our Original Frame and Constitution, he also must needs *actually Reform* us: But it does thence follow, that *none but God* can *restore* a Degenerate Creature; and that all those, whose Corrupt Nature is reform'd, derive that Blessing from the Almighty Author of their Being. The same Divine Goodness, Wisdom and Power, that at the Creation of the World, said, *Let there be Light*, (which Operative Word produc'd Light immediately) is necessary to illuminate the benighted Minds of Men, who are by Sin become *the Children of Darkness*; and *to call them out of that Darkness into the Marvellous Light* of Divine Truth. Therefore the Apostle *Paul* assures us, that it is *that God, who at first commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, that shines*

Gen. 1. 3.
1 Thess. 5. 5.
1 Pet. 2. 9.
2 Cor. 4. 6.

shines in the Hearts of such *to give the Light of the knowledg of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* He alone, who made all things *very Good* in their kind at the Creation, and who then *made Man upright*, is able to *rectify* the perverseness of his *Will*, and to *purify* his *Heart* from the Pollution it has contracted: To *create* in him *a clean Heart, and to renew a right Spirit within him.* Nothing less than our Creator's own Divine *Goodness* could move him to restore deprav'd Sinners; nothing less than his own Divine *Wisdom* could contrive the Method of their Restoration; and nothing less than his Divine *Power* could put it in Execution, and accomplish it: He contriv'd the *Scheme* of this Glorious Work, He appointed and prepar'd the *Means*, and He renders them effectual to the *End* designed.

Gen. 1. 31. Eccl. 7. 29. Psal. 51. 10.

Who but our Creator is able to restore us, and reform us from Sin; seeing Sin is a Privation of Sanctity, a *Nullity* oppos'd to the *Being of Holiness?* Nay a state of Sin is a state of *Rebellion* against God, a state of Enmity and *Opposition* to the Author of our Being; therefore worse than Annihilation it self: because that which

is not, as it can do no *Good*, so does no *Evil*; as it is not *for* God, so is not *against* Him. But a sinful Creature commits his Sins *against him, even against Him*, (as the Psalmist emphatically repeats it) *and does Evil in his sight*; actually opposes, and disserves Him, who is the supreme Being, and sole Author of the whole Creation. Therefore tho' the *Word* of God brought us out of *Nullity*, and gave us Being; nothing less than the *Blood* of God could avail to redeem us from that *Abyss* of Iniquity and Misery we were sunk into by our Apostacy from Him.

Psal. 51. 4.

Act. 20. 28.

Who but He that *establish'd the World by his Wisdom, and stretched out the Heavens by his Discretion and Understanding*, could have form'd the *Method* of our Restoration, so as to glorify his *Holiness and Justice*, as well as his *Grace and Mercy* by it; so as to make *Mercy and Truth meet together, and Righteousness and Peace to kiss each other*, as he hath done by recovering fallen Man by the Sacrifice of his only begotten Son? What Depths of *Wisdom* appear in this Stupendous *Mystery of Godliness, God manifested in the Flesh* --- That *Sin* should be punish'd with

Jer. 10. 12. and 51. 15.

Psal. 85. 10.

1 Tim. 3. 16.

with the utmoſt *Severity*, and yet the *Sinner* ſpar'd by Infinite *Mercy!* That our Saviour, who *knew no Sin, ſhould be made Sin for us, that we might be made the Righteouſneſs of God in him!* And the ſame Characters of Divine Wiſdom, that appear in the *Foundation*, are ſeen alſo in the whole *Superſtructure* of the Church of God, and in every part of this great Work of Reſtoration. 2 Cor. 5. 21.

Nothing can be more aſtoniſhing than that Infinite *Mercy* that appears in this Mighty Work; which can have no other Author than that Infinite Being that hath created us. Who, but *He that made us, would* or could *have* ſo much *Mercy on us?* And who, but *he that formed us, would ſhew us* ſo much *Favour*, as to reſcue us from Sin, and the Curſes entail'd on it, by ſo endearing a Ranſom, as the precious Blood of his own Son? Iſai. 27. 11.

And as none but our Maker is capable of Redeeming us; ſo the *frequent uſe* he makes of the Term [Creator] in his Word, to encourage Men to obey him, and to truſt in him, may well be ſuppos'd to intimate the Deſign he had fram'd to reſtore Sinners to his Favour: For had he not revealed himſelf to be *Willing*,

as well as *Able*, to be our Creator in this Sense, by taking us into his Hand the *second* Time to reform us, or create us anew; there would be no room for us, since we have all violated the Laws of our *first* Creation, to hope to offer any acceptable Service to him, or to expect any Favour from him: There would be no Incouragement to remember him as our Creator in the *first* Sense exclusive of this *latter*; because our Guilt would fill us with Terror at every due Remembrance of him, who, as he made us for his Glory, so is able to punish us, and might justly do it, for the Indignities we have offer'd him by our Sins. So that whenever God is pleas'd to press, or encourage us to our Duty in his Word, by stiling Himself our Creator, we are to consider that *Title*, as tacitely including his being our *Redeemer* too; that *the God that made us*, is also *the Rock of our Salvation.*

Deut. 32. 15.

And we find the great Work of the Holy Spirit in Renewing and Regenerating a Sinner is frequently term'd [Creation] in Holy Writ; both to signify the *Greatness* of the Work, and the *Resemblance* this *New* Creation in several respects

2 Cor. 5. 17. Gal. 6. 15.

spects bears to the *first*; and also to denote, that both those mighty Works are to be ascrib'd to the same Author; and that God may be term'd our Creator, not only in that he gave us a *Being*, but also in that he often makes Sinners become *New Creatures*, by *Renewing them in knowledg after his own Image*; *and* by *Creating them in Righteousness and true Holiness*: Who are therefore call'd *his Workmanship Created in Christ Jesus to good Works*, &c.

Col. 3. 10.
Eph. 4. 24.
Eph. 2. 10.

And 'tis worth remarking, that this Word [Creator] in our Text, is of the *Plural* Number in the Original [Thy Creators], as if design'd to express the great Obligations Men are under to each Person of the Blessed Trinity, for *Making*, *Redeeming*, and *Sanctifying* them; the *former* of which is eminently ascribed to the *Father*, the *second* to the *Son*, and the *last* to the *Holy Spirit*, (tho' all concur in each of those mighty Works) and to signify that all these Works may be fitly express'd by this common Name of *Creation*.

בוראיך
So Isai. 54. 5.
בעליך
עשיך

4. As God is our Creator, he is the Soveraign *Arbiter*, and *Disposer* of our Being. He is the Soveraign Judg of the

World, inflicting *Puniſhments*, and diſpenſing *Favours*, as he pleaſes. He that has made us, and preſerves us, has power to render us Happy or Miſerable: He has the Iſſues of Life and Death in his Hand. He that hath created us, knows all the Capacity we have of Joy or Sorrow, Pleaſure or Pain; and has power to affect us with either of them, as he pleaſes. He can make his *Arrows* of
Pſal. 38. 2. Terror *ſtick faſt* in the Conſcience; or fill the Soul with *unſpeakable Joy*. He can puniſh or chear the Mind with his *immediate* Frowns or Smiles; or he can convey Anguiſh or Joy into the Soul by the *Occaſion* of different Impreſſions on the Tabernacle of Fleſh and Blood wherein ſhe dwells: He can diſpenſe Puniſhments or Pleaſures by his own Hand *immediately*, or *mediately* by any of his Creatures. And
Job 34. 29. *---when he giveth Quietneſs, who then can make Trouble? And when he hideth his Face, who then can behold him? whether it be done againſt a Nation or againſt a Man only.* 'Tis *the Lord* (as
1 Sam. 2. 6, 7, 8. *Hannah* ſpeaks) that *killeth and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the Grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh Poor and maketh Rich, he bringeth low and lifteth*

eth up. Which this Holy Propheteſs proves by this Argument; *For the Pillars of the Earth are the Lord's, and he hath ſet the World upon them*; where his *Soveraign Power* over Men, to diſpoſe of their State as he pleaſes, is infer'd from his *Relation* to them as their Creator. And when the Angel in the *Revelation* proteſts *there ſhould be Time no longer*; He *ſwears by him that created Heaven and Earth, and Sea, and the things therein*; to ſhew, that God, as *Creator* of the World, is the Soveraign *Arbiter* of it, and that the Conſummation of Time, and of Temporal Things, belongs to him under that Character. So that 'tis our Maker, that both *ſhews the Path of Life*, and holds in his Hand the *Keys of Hell and Death.* And as he has made all things: So *he does whatſoever he pleaſes in Heaven, and in Earth, in the Sea, and all deep places.* And, *Who can deliver out of his hand?* Seeing *he doth according to his Will in the Army of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth; and none can ſtay his Hand, or ſay unto him, What doſt Thou?*

Rev. 10.6. Pſal. 16. 11. Rev. 1.18. Pſal. 135. 6. Job. 10.7. Dan. 4.35.

Thus have we endeavoured to ſhew what is comprehended in God's Title

of [Creator] on which we have taken the greater Liberty to expatiate, because hereby a solid Foundation is laid for some of those *Reasons*, which we are hereafter to insist on, to enforce the Duty in our Text; in the *Division* of which we have observ'd, that in the *Terms* of the Duty *(Remember thy Creator)* the *Reasons* of that Duty are in part insinuated.

Having given some Account of the *Object* of this Duty, *viz.* God, under the Title of our *Creator*; We shall now

Secondly, Briefly explain the *Act* it self of *Remembring* him, and shew what that imports.

The *Memory* is that Faculty of the Soul whereby she is capable of recalling the *Ideas* of things, which have before been present to her.

But here, *to Remember* does not only signify the exercising of the Understanding on our Creator, by reflecting on what our Senses, Reason, and Divine Revelation may have suggested to our Minds, concerning God under that Character: It does not here barely import [*to meditate* on him, and *bear* him *in mind*] but, because the Understanding directs

Psal. 63. 6. Luk. 17. 32.

directs the Will and Affections, and Men move and act very much according to their Conceptions of things, their *Deſires* following the Conduct of their *Thoughts*; this Term is applied both to the one, and to the other. Sometimes it ſignifies to *Eſteem* and *Reſpect*, as *Pſal.* 20. 3. *The Lord* ---- *Remember all thy Offerings, and accept thy burnt Sacrifice.* Sometimes to *Truſt*, as *Pſal.* 20. 7. *Some Truſt in Horſes, and ſome in Chariots; but we will Remember the Name of the Lord our God.* Sometimes to *Worſhip* and *Praiſe*, as 1 *Chron.* 16. 12. where, after *David* had exhorted to *ſing* to God, to *glory* in him, and *ſeek* him, becauſe of his mighty Works, he adds to the ſame purpoſe --- *Remember the marvellous Works that he hath done*, &c. *q. d.* Adore and praiſe him for them.

Su Eccl. 9. 15.

Su 1 Chron. 16. ver. 8, 9, 10, 11.

And this may be further illuſtrated by the uſe of the oppoſite Term of [Forgetting] which ſometimes ſignifies to *diſeſteem* and *ſlight*, as *Jer.* 2. 32. *Can a Maid forget her Ornaments, or a Bride her Attire? yet my People have forgotten me days without Number.* Sometimes to *Diſtruſt*, as *Pſal.* 78. 7. --- *That they might ſet their Hope in God, and not forget*

get the Works of God: And ſometimes to *neglect to praiſe and worſhip God,* as *Pſal.* 106. 12, 13. —*They ſang his Praiſe; they ſoon forgot his Works, they waited not for his Counſel.* Or to *forſake the Service* of God, as *Deut.* 6. 12. *Beware leſt thou forget the Lord,* that is, by *going after other Gods,* as it is explain'd in *ver.* 14.

So that, to *Remember* God does not only import, to *think* or *meditate* often on him, but to *think worthily* and *becomingly* of him; and to pay him a Reſpect in ſome meaſure ſutable to the *Idea* we have of him. To remember his glorious Perfections ſo, as to *eſteem* and *reſpect* him; deliberately to call to mind the Number and Quality of his Favours, and to recollect, how fit an Object of *Truſt*, and *Praiſe*, and of all *Worſhip*, he is; ſo as to engage our Souls to confide in him, to offer him the Sacrifice of Praiſe, and all the Adoration and Service that we are capable of rendering. In a word, to remember our Creator, is to remember his Omniſcience, Power and Juſtice, ſo as to reverence and fear him; to remember his Goodneſs, Mercy and Veracity, ſo as to love

and

and praise him; and to remember his Holiness and Purity, so as to imitate and obey him: 'Tis so attentively and seriously to meditate on his Nature, and on his Works, that *while we are musing, the Fire may burn* (as the Psalmist speaks) that our Thoughts may kindle a holy Flame of Love in our Hearts towards him, which will break out in becoming Acts of Service, and Obedience to his Glory. 'Tis to serve him both with our Understanding, Will and Affections, to devote our selves entirely to him. Psal. 39. 3.

And as our *whole Man* is to be dedicated to the Service of our Creator; so he also deserves the *whole* of our *Time:* and we ought to begin as early as possible to remember him: For this our Text shews,

II. In prescribing the *special Time* for engaging in this Duty; which now falls under our Consideration.

1. 'Tis prescrib'd in express *Terms* [in the days of thy Youth].

2. By an opposite *Circumlocution,* containing a Description of *Old Age* [while the evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no

no pleasure in them]; that is, before the approach of Old Age:

As is evident, both in that these *Evil Days*, &c. are opposed to the *Days of Youth*; and in that many elegant *Characters* are used to decypher the Infirmities and Miseries of *Old Age*, in the sequel of this Chapter, immediately after the Text.

And in this *Description* of *Old Age*, we have

1. The *Time* it self expressed by [*Days and Years*].

2. The *Character* of that Time of Life, those [*Days are Evil*], and those [*Years* such as (we shall confess that) *we have no pleasure in them*].

1. For the *Time* it self, it may be call'd [*Days and Years*];

(1.) Either *emphatically* to signify one and the same thing; it being an usual Elegancy in the *Hebrew Dialect*, to express the same thing in various *synonymous* Terms in two Sentences, immediately succeeding one another, which serve partly for *Illustration*, and partly to *inculcate* Truth in the Mind: Of which we have Instances in almost every Verse of the 51st *Psalm*, as well as in many other

ther places of Scripture, as 'tis eaſy to obſerve. Or elſe,

(2.) By [*Days*] to ſignify the *Brevity* and Great *Uncertainty* of the Continuance of that Time; (which is ſoon ſwallow'd up by Death, as the fleeting Days of Youth are ſoon loſt in Old Age) and by [*Years*] the *tedious paſſing* of this ſhort Time, by reaſon of the many Afflictions and Infirmities a Man then labours under: Tho' the Time is very *ſhort* in it ſelf, 'tis made very long by Miſery and Pain, which ſeem greatly to extend it. For as the Soul, when fill'd with *Pleaſure* and *Joy*, during her eaſy poſture, forgets the Time, as it were, and ſuffers it to ſlide from her with little Notice; which makes it appear extremely ſhort: So when ſhe is fill'd with Sentiments of *Pain* and *Sorrow*, her uneaſy Situation, and impatient deſire of Change, do ſo conſtantly apply her Thoughts to the conſideration of that Time, which is the Continuance of her Miſery, that it ſeems very long and irkſome to her: So that the *Duration* of her Sorrow ſeems always to increaſe proportionably to the *Degree* of it; and a Man imagines himſelf to have been much longer under an

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acute than under a *slight* Pain, when in reality the Time of their Continuance is equal. Thus every Moment of Time becomes an heavy Burden to one in Misery, who (as *Moses* says the *Israelites* should do, when under punishment for their Sins) cries out, *in the Morning, Would to God it were Evening! and in the Evening, Would to God it were Morning!* ---- And 'tis well known that this is the Language of Old Age.

Deut. 28. 67.

And therefore,

2. 'Tis express'd by the *Character* of [*Evil*] Days, and Years wherein [*no pleasure*] is to be had; which may be thus explain'd.

(1.) By [*Evil Days*] may be understood the Decays and Diseases of Old Age: And by [*the Years wherein there is no Pleasure*] may be signified the Unhappiness and Misery that those Distempers and Infirmities give the Mind, these being a great Occasion of her Sorrow, which is then especially aggravated, when the Guilt of the Soul conspires with the Distempers of the Body, to make the Man compleatly miserable; so that *he shall say*, that is, he shall confess or complain that, *he has no Pleasure in those evil Days,*

Ætas mala. Plaut.

Days, that he has no Sanctuary of Eaſe to fly to, no Reflection to make that can allay the Trouble of his Mind, no Medicine to uſe, that can remove the Diſtempers of his Body. For this is often the Condition of thoſe, who *forgetting the LORD their Maker* in their Youth, grow Old in the ſervice of Sin. Iſai. 51. 13.

Or,

(2.) By [*Evil Days*] which is a *poſitive Character*, the Time of Old Age may be repreſented, as attended with many poſitive Afflictions and Pains; and by [the *Privation* of Pleaſure at that Time] which is a *Negative Character*, may be ſignified the incapacity of reliſhing the Joys and Pleaſures of this Life, that accompanies thoſe unpleaſant Years, wherein the Organs of Senſe are very much enfeebled, eſpecially when Old Age has been haſtned by the Intemperance of Youth.

And now, ſince it appears that God as our *Creator* (in the comprehenſive Senſe wherein we have explain'd that Title) requires us to *remember* him, ſo as to devote our ſelves to his Fear and Service, and that in the Time of our *Youth*, before *Old Age*, with its many Afflictions and

and Sorrows, overtakes us; if one makes but a transient Reflection on these things, 'tis easy to observe that the Wise Man in this Exhortation intimates,

III. The *Reasons* of the Duty enjoin'd;

1. In representing God, the *Object* of it, to us, under the August *Character* of [our *Creator*]; which evidently entitles him to the Service of our Youth. And

2. In setting *Old Age* before us, as a *Scene* of Misery and Horror; as a Time
Gen 47.9. made up of *few and evil Days*. And in opposing them to the *better* Days of Youth; thereby to insinuate, that as Old Age brings with it many great Disadvantages and Impediments to obstruct our Conversion to God; so Youth is attended with many favourable Circumstances, that render it the best and fittest Season to initiate one's self in the ways of Righteousness.

The strength of these Reasons I shall consider at large hereafter: And shall content my self at present with making some few brief *Remarks*,

(1.) On the Terms used to prescribe the *special Time* of the Duty enjoin'd in the Text. (2.) On

(2.) On the Terms, whereby both the *Object* and *Act* of this *Duty* are expreſs'd: To ſhew how fitly they are adapted to the *State* and *Circumſtances* of thoſe that are Young, who are the Perſons to whom this Exhortation is addreſs'd;

With which I ſhall conclude this Diſcourſe.

1. From the Terms uſed to ſhew the *Time* of remembring our Creator, it may be obſerv'd;

(1.) That this *double* Timing of the Duty, *firſt* by expreſly preſcribing it [in Youth] and *then* [before Old Age, with its Miſeries comes on] gives the Words a certain Force and *Energy*, proper to inculcate ſo important an Admonition: 'Tis a giving *Precept upon Precept, and Line upon Line,* (as the Prophet *Iſaiah* ſpeaks) which he commends as the proper Courſe to inſtruct the Young, or (to uſe his own Words) to *teach them Knowledg, and to make them underſtand Doctrine, who are weaned from the Milk, and drawn from the Breaſts* — to gain the Attention of giddy and unthinking Youth, many of whom, tho' *God* condeſcends *to ſpeak once, yea twice,* (as he doth here) are yet

Iſai. 28. v. 10, 13.

Ver. 9.

Job 33. 14.

so dull of hearing, as not to perceive the *Reasonableness* of their Duty, or at least not sufficiently to consider it; and the *Danger* to which the neglect of it exposes 'em. And

(2.) We may further observe that this Obligation of Remembring our Creator, extends it self equally with the *Capacity* we have of Reflecting on God, as our Maker; and increases proportionably to the knowledg we may obtain of him. So that none are entirely exempt from it, who are capable of exercising their Thoughts on God: and therefore those may not pretend to be dispens'd with, who have not arriv'd to the full maturity of Youth, if they are in any degree capable of knowing their Creator. As far as they are able to take notice of his Nature, and of his Will, so far are they oblig'd to worship and obey him.

And this is further cleared by the *Opposition* the Wise Man seems to make, betwixt the *Duty* in our Text, and the *Vanity of Childhood and Youth*, mentioned just before: So that if we take [*Vanity*] here in a *Moral* Sense, the Exhortation extends it self to Persons that fall under either of those Denominations, that are either

either in the state of Childhood or Youth. And if by [*Vanity*] *Natural* Frailty and Mortality be intended, the words are not less extensive; for then the frailty of Childhood and Youth, is used as a Consideration to prepare the way for this Admonition; and *Children* as well as *Young Men*, are therefore excited to give themselves to the Service of their Creator: Because neither are exempt from the danger of Sickness and of Death.

And this may be further collected from the charge given to Youth in the Text, to remember their Creator, not only before the Evil Days of Old Age are *come*; but before those Years [*draw nigh*] while Old Age is yet at a distance: Which shews that none that are capable of reflecting on their *relation* to God as Creator, may excuse themselves as too Young to be concern'd in his Service. For as his being our Creator, is the foundation of this Duty of remembering him: So 'tis evident, that our Obligation to it is to be measured by the Capacity we have of knowing him as such. Therefore he may well require that the tender *Buds* of Childhood, as well as the ma-

turer *Blossoms* of Youth be consecrated to him; who sometimes *perfects his Praise out of the mouths of* (such who in comparison of those of riper Years are but) *Babes, and Sucklings*; and therefore, by the Psalmist, calls upon *Young Men and Maidens, and Children*, as well as *Old Men*, to praise and worship him.

Psal. 8. 2. Mat. 21. 16.

Psal. 148. 12, 13.

2. That the Terms of [*Remembring their Creator*] are wisely adapted to the state of Youth, to engage them early in the Service of God, will appear by the following Remarks on each of those Terms.

1. God under the Title of *Creator*, is fitly recommended to the Young, as the *Object* of their *Worship* and *Obedience*.

(1.) Because 'tis a *Term* that easily excites in the Mind a strong and clear *Idea* of God's infinite *Power*, *Wisdom* and *Goodness*. And the Wise Man having to do with Youth, whose *unexperience* for want of Years, and whose *unattention*, for want of a habit of steady thinking, renders them less capable of arriving at the knowledg of *the Deep things of God*, than those who to the advantage of a long observation of things have added that of addicting themselves

1 Cor. 2. 10.

to

to frequent Thoughtfulneſs and Meditation; he makes uſe of that Title of God, which might moſt familiarly ſuggeſt a proper Notion of him to their Minds. He expoſes to them the *Alphabet* of the Creation, out of which even Children may eaſily learn to ſpell the Being of a *Deity*. The Ignorant and the Young, even *thoſe that run*, (as the Prophet ſpeaks) the heedleſs and unattentive, *may read* the *Characters* of the Divine Attributes, which are plainly engraven on the Pillars even of this *Material* World. And (as the Apoſtle obſerves) may *clearly diſcern the Eternal Power and Godhead* of the Creator, who is *Inviſible*, by the curious Fabrick of this *Viſible Creation*; ſo as to render them altogether *inexcuſable*, if they neglect to glorify God according to thoſe ſenſible notices of him, which they may ſo eaſily and conſtantly receive.

Hab. 2. 2.

Rom. 1. 20, 21.

For as the ſight of a Magnificent Palace, induces us to conſider the Skill and Ability of the *Architect* that built it: So when we take a ſerious proſpect of the Structure and Frame of the World, or of any part of it, it familiarly raiſes our Thoughts to its Great *Author* and

Cause: For as *every House is built by some Man*; so 'tis natural to conclude
Heb. 3. 4. (with the Apostle) that *he that built all things is God.* And therefore

(2.) This [of Creator] is a Title which God is usually pleas'd to assume in Scripture, to distinguish himself, as the *True and Living God*, from the Idols of the Heathen; and to convince their Ignorant *Votaries*, that He is the only proper *Object* of Religious Worship. — *The LORD is the True God* (saith the
Jer. 10. 10. Prophet *Jeremiah*); *he is the Living God, and an everlasting King.* — *The Gods that*
Ver. 11. *have not made the Heavens and the Earth, even they shall perish from the Earth, and from under these Heavens.* (Then speaking
Ver. 12. again of the True God, he says) *He hath made the Earth by his Power; he hath established the World by his Wisdom, and hath stretched out the Heavens by his Discretion.*
V. 14, 15. And then, having spoken of the Vanity of
Ver. 16. Idols, he adds; *The Portion of* Jacob *is not like them; for he is the Former of all things.*
Isai. 45. 12. And the Prophet *Isaiah* introduces the God of *Israel*, proving himself to be the True God, under the same *Character*. *I have made the Earth, and created Man upon it: I, even my Hands have stretched*

out

out the Heavens, and all their Hoſt have I commanded. And, a little after, the Prophet inſults over the makers of Idols, and then adds, *Thus ſaith the LORD, that Created the Heavens, God himſelf, that formed the Earth and made it, he hath eſtabliſhed it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited, I am the LORD, and there is none elſe.* v. 16, 17. Ver. 18.

All which ſerves to ſhew how properly this Title [of *Creator*] is uſed in our Text, to direct the Minds of Youth to the true *Object* of Love and Adoration; who are ready to make as many Gods, as there are pleaſing Objects in the World; and to ſacrifice themſelves, and all they have to thoſe inchanting Idols, that ſtrike their Senſes with any agreeable Impreſſion. And

(3.) This is a *Relative* Title, denoting the *Natural Relation* God bears to the World: For the Terms [*Creator and Creature*] mutually ſuppoſe one another: And not only his Relation to the World in *General*; but to Mankind, nay to every *Individual* Humane Creature in *particular* in the Word, [*Thy Creator*] is propos'd as the ground of that Service every one that comes into the World,

is oblig'd to pay to the Almighty, whose Title of [*Creator*] includes our entire dependance on him. So that the Wise Man prudently makes choice of a Term, expressing every Man's *Relation* to God as his Creature; because 'tis the *First* and most *Evident* Principle, on which to found our Duty of Obedience to him, and most apt to affect the Soul. For, as when I think on God as *Creator* of the World in *General*, it raises in my Mind a great *Idea* of his Majesty and Soveraignty: So when I consider him as *MY Creator*, that *Relative Character* gives an endearing force to the reasonable Obligation I find my self under to serve and worship him; because I then look upon him, not only as *the living God*, Psal. 42.8. but also as *the God of MY Life.*

We may also observe,

2. The *Propriety* of the Term [*Remember*] to express the Respect and Service those that are Young owe to their Maker.

(1.) [*To remember*, &c.] signifying the Exercise of the Thoughts on God, is fitly urg'd on the Young; because as the most early Impressions are the most deep and lasting; so a habit of Holy Medita-

tion

tion is ſooneſt acquir'd in Yonth, when the Mind is moſt at leiſure, and not embarraſs'd with that multitude of Thoughts and Projects about the Affairs of the World, which riper Years are uſually incumber'd with. What fitter Term could be choſen, by which to urge the duty of Young Perſons to their Maker, than that of [*Remembring*] him? ſeeing the *Memory* is a Faculty that Young People commonly *excel* in, and in which they often *glory*; a Faculty that grows ripe betimes, and eaſily retains that *Tincture*, with which it is early and thoroughly imbued. 'Tis as if *Solomon* had ſaid; You that are Young, ought to ſeaſon your *Memories* with the beſt Impreſſions betimes, when they are moſt capable both of *receiving* 'em, and *retaining* 'em; and to *fill* your Minds with the thoughts of God, and of the Service you owe him, before they are *crowded* with the Concerns and Buſineſs of a perplexing World.

(2.) A *Caution* ſeems to be wiſely inſinuated in this Term againſt forgetting the Worſhip and Service of God, which heedleſs Youth too much devoted to Senſual Pleaſure, is often guilty of; for tho' the

the Young have the most capable *Memories*, yet they are very prone to *forget* their Duty to their Maker. And how aptly so ever they *remember* other things, they often live as if *God* were *not in any of* Psal. 10.4. *their Thoughts:* For they commonly divert and dissipate their Minds so much with the amusing Pleasures of this present World, that they don't allow themselves time enough, either to look *backward*, to remember that God who *created* 'em, and to whom they owe their *Preservation*; nor *forward*, to consider, that 'tis only in his power to *renew* and *reform* them from their Vices and Errors; and that he will one day *judge* them; who as he is their Creator, has the Soveraign disposal of their *Being*, and has Power either to save, or to destroy: In whose Favour is *Life*, and whose Displeasure is more terrible than *Death*.

THE

THE *Reasonableness & Advantages* OF AN Early Conversion to God DEMONSTRATED.

SERMON II.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the Evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

HAVING before explain'd the *Exhortation* in the Text, which the *Wise* Man addresses to those that are Young, *viz.* To *Remember their Creator in the Days of their Youth*; or to devote

vote themselves early to the Worship and Service of God:

We are now to consider the *Reasons*, whereby this Duty is enforc'd, which are plainly enough insinuated in the *Text*, as we have before observ'd in the *Division* of it.

First, In the Terms of the *Duty*, where our *Relation* to God, as our *Creator*, implies the Obligations we have to adore and serve him.

Secondly, In the words used to signify the proper *Time* of engaging in this Duty, *viz.* [*In the Days of Youth, before the Evil Days of Old Age* come, *&c.*] Where the *fitness* of the time of *Youth* to enter one's self into the Service of God, and the *Disadvantage* of deferring it to *Old Age*, are intimated.

First, Then we shall take a view of the *Reasons* that oblige us to devote our selves to the Service of God in Youth, which arise from the *Relation* that is between him and us, as he is our *Creator*, and we are his *Creatures*: And this in that large and comprehensive sense we have given of the Term [*Creator*,] by which we have

have laid the Ground-work of our preſent Reaſoning.

1. As God is our *Creator* and *Preſerver*, we derive from him our *Being*, and the whole *Duration* of it; that is, the whole of our Time: Therefore,

(1.) He has an equitable Claim to us as long as we have a *Being*, and to our *Youth* by conſequence: 'Tis but juſt that what we receive from his hand, ſhould be again offer'd to him; that ſince we live by his *Good Will*, we ſhould live to his *Glory*. Can we aſſign any portion of our *Time*, which we do not equally derive from our *Creator* with the reſt of it? Why then ſhould any of thoſe Moments that are allotted us by his mere Favour, be injuriouſly ſubſtracted from his Service, and abus'd to his Diſhonour?

The great God, whoſe chief End in all he does, is his own Glory, becauſe that is the beſt and moſt excellent End of all, made us, and continues our *Being* for his own Pleaſure and Glory. Therefore to alienate any part of our Time from him, is to oppoſe his Deſigns, and (as much as in us lies) to endeavour to fruſtrate his End, and ſacrilegiouſly to rob him of his Honour.

Nor

Nor do we only withhold Divine *Honour* from him to whom it is due, when we neglect to employ any part of our Time in the Service of our Creator: for Man being a Creature that can never be altogether idle and unactive, that part of our Lives, or portion of our Time which we divert from the proper end for which it is allow'd us, is not only *stolen* from God, but *devoted* to the service of Sin. 'Tis to snatch away a Sacrifice from the Altar of the True God, and immediately to offer it to the worst of Idols. How provoking must this needs be to that God who is so jealous of his *Glory*, that he *will not give it to any other*? Much less will he suffer it, with Impunity, to be given to Sin, which is infinitely opposite to his holy Nature, and which he therefore hates with a perfect Hatred.

Isa. 42. 8. ch. 48. 11.

No wonder then that he requires the whole *succession* of our Time to be devoted to himself, and that *whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do it to his Glory*; making that the chief end of all our *Actions*, which is the end of our *Being*, and of the *Continuation* of it. And this seemed so highly reasonable to the *Psalmist*, that after a long Meditation on

1 Cor. 10. 31.

on the Works of the great Creator, it influences him to a firm Reſolution to honour and worſhip the Author of his *Being* throughout the whole courſe of his *Time*. *I will ſing unto the LORD* (ſays he) *as long as I live; I will ſing praiſe unto my God, while I have my Being.* Pſal. 104. 33. Pſ. 146. 2.

Now if the *whole* of our Time be the *Propriety* of our *Creator*, not given us to *ſquander* away as we pleaſe, but lent us to *improve* to his Honour, then he may juſtly claim our Youth to be dedicated to his Service: If he is the Proprietor of the *whole* of our Time (as we have prov'd he is) in that he is our Creator, he has a right to each *part* of it: If we withhold from him the Service of our Youth, we detain a part of our Time from him, who has a Natural Right to the whole of it. And that part of Time, when once elaps'd, being irrevocable, there remains but a part of the whole to offer; and we can then only render to the great *Author* of our Being, a defective and *mutilous* Sacrifice. And,

(2.) As our Youth belongs to our Maker, as a *part* of that Time, of which the *Summe Total* is his Due, ſo it is his Propriety, as it is the *Firſt-fruits* of that Time,

Time, the *succession* of which we enjoy by his mere Favour and Bounty. To be serv'd *first* is considered as a Token of Honour and Respect amongst Men; how reasonably then does the Infinite Dignity of our Creator, joyn'd to the Obligations we owe him as *such*, claim at our hands an humble and solemn dedication of that part of our Time, *especially* to himself, which he *first bestows*, and in which he *first renders* us capable of offering him Service? The Sacred Historian of the Creation representing the Sanctification of the *Sabbath*, as immediately succeeding the Creation of Man, (the last of God's Works on the last of his Working-Days) seems to signify the Obligation we are all under to consecrate our Youth, the *First-fruits* of our Time, to the Service of the Author of our Being; and that as the *first* Day our first Parents liv'd after their Creation, was especially sacred to God as an Oblation of the *first-fruits* of their Time; so we their Posterity, ought to devote our Youth to our Maker, and to *serve* him, as soon as we are capable of *knowing* him. Righteous *Abel* pay'd an acceptable Homage to his Creator, by presenting him a Sacrifice of

Gen. 4. 4.

the

the *Firſtlings* of his Flock. And as the *firſt-fruits* of the *Holy-Land* were yearly conſecrated to God as the Great Creator and Soveraign Proprietor of it: So his Right over his Creatures was alſo anti-ently acknowledg'd, by the dedication both of the *firſt-born* of Cattle, and of Men to his Service. All which certainly is written for our Inſtruction, and may fairly enough be apply'd to our preſent purpoſe: For if God has a *Special* Right to the *firſt* of all we have, (as theſe anti-ent Inſtitutions ſeem to ſignify) then he may reaſonably challenge the *firſt* of our Time, as having a peculiar Title to *that* part, by the dedication of which we ac-knowledg we are indebted to him for the *whole*; and the refuſal of which is an implicite Aſſertion of our Independency on him, as if we owed only to our ſelves our own *Being*, and our *Time*, which is the duration of it.

Exod. 22. 29. ch. 23. 19. Exod. 13. 2, 12.

So that they think very prepoſterouſly, who count the Time of Youth the moſt unſeaſonable of all for the Service of God, when 'tis evident, that if it were allow-able to ſubſtract *any* part of our Time from him (as it is not, yet) of *all* the parts of it, it would be the moſt indecent

and disrespectful to withhold from him *this* of Youth, (taken in a large sense, not only to contain Childhood, but all the Flower of our Time) because he not only claims a Right to it, as 'tis a *part* of our Time, the whole of which is deriv'd from him; but as it is *that peculiar part* of it, which ought to be dedicated to him as an Homage, whereby we acknowledg the Obligation he has laid us under for the *whole* he is pleas'd to allow us. Nor has our Creator a more reasonable claim to our Youth, as his peculiar, because 'tis the *first* part, than he has,

(3.) Because 'tis also the *Best* part of our Time, wherein the Faculties of the *Soul* have ordinarily no less Gracefulness and Vigour, than the Members of the *Body* have Beauty and Strength; wherein we are most capable of engaging in any great Undertaking, and possess suitable Advantages for the accomplishment of it (as we shall have occasion hereafter to shew more at large.) 'Tis then but just, that he that made us *what* we *are*, should have the best of *what* we *have*. If he has a Right to *all* our Time in general, because we receive it all from his hand, he has a peculiar Right to the *best*

of

of our Time, as that which his *own* Infinite *Excellency*, and his great *Goodness to us*, direct us to consecrate to him, as most proper for an Offering. Why has our Maker ordinarily adorn'd Youth with so many delectable Flowers, with so much Strength and Agility of *Body*, and Comelineſs of *Form*, such a Capacity of *Memory*, and Quickneſs of *Fancy*, such a Readineſs of *Perception*, and Vivacity of *Spirit?* Why has he crown'd it with so many advantageous Qualities, but to indicate by these Preparations, that he has design'd it for a Special Sacrifice. The word used in our Text and elsewhere for Youth, properly signifies the *Choice* of our Time, our *Select* or *Chosen* Time, and does import not only that our Creator *chooses* that part of our Time for himself, but that it has several Advantages that render it the most *eligible*; that 'tis in it self the most *fit* to be *chosen*, and set apart for his Service.

בחוּרוֹתיך בָּחַר *elegit, vel filegit.*

'Tis therefore to offer a great Indignity to our Creator, to refuse him the prime of our Time, on pretence that we'll offer him our Decrepid Age, the worst of our Days, and the very dregs of 'em, as if he were unworthy of the *best* part of

what he has given us, as if we could offer *any* thing beyond his Deserts, who has given us our *All*; nay, as if the Devil, the World, and our own corrupt Inclinations, were more worthy *Objects* of Worship than the ever Blessed God who has made us; as if he were to be postpon'd to the vilest and most detestable of all Idols; As if both the *first* and *best* of what we have ought to be devoted to these; and as if the Lame and Blind and Maim'd were the only *Sacrifices* becoming his Altar.

Numb. 8. 24, 25. The *Priests* under the Law were consecrated in their *Youth*, and continued in the Service of the Sanctuary only to *that* Age wherein 'tis ordinary for Natural Strength visibly to abate; to signify that *that* part of our Time, *wherein* we are most capable of serving our Maker, ought especially to be devoted to him as the most acceptable Portion of our days. And is it not fit that he that has *made* us for *himself*, should have the *Best* of our Service? That the strength of our Bodies should be dedicated to him that moulded and compos'd 'em? And that the powers of our Souls should, in their most flourishing and vigorous state, be offer'd

offer'd to the great Author of all our Faculties? Ought not the moſt attentive Regards of our *Underſtandings* to be employ'd in contemplating him that has made us *Rational*, and the moſt ſprightly and eager Sallies of our *Wills* to be directed towards him who has made us *deſiring* Creatures? Certainly as God is our Maker, he *deſerves* as well as *requires* that we moſt ſeriouſly *contemplate*, and moſt intenſely *love* him, on the account both of his *own* Infinite *Perfections*, and of the *Emanations* of his *Goodneſs* toward *us* his Creatures; and conſequently that we improve the *beſt* of our Time in thoſe Holy Exerciſes of *meditating* on him and *aſpiring* after him.

2. As the Notion of [*Creator*] includes, that upon the Suppoſition of Man's *Fall* by Sin, God alone is able to perform this mighty Work of *Reforming* or *New-Creating* him; and as the manner of the uſe of this Term in the *Holy Scripture* further intimates his *Willingneſs* ſo to do (as we have ſhewn at large before:) This further ſhews the reaſon we have to devote our Youth to his Service. And this Conſideration re-

news and redoubles the force of the former Reasons: For *what is Man* (fallen
Psal. 8. 4. Man) *that God should be mindful of him? And the Son of Man that he should visit him?* What great Grace has the great God manifested to us, that when we had forfeited all the Blessings to be expected of him, as our *Creator*, in rebelliously casting off that Natural Obligation we were under to obey him, he should neither make us cease to be his Creatures, and entirely dissolve that *Relation*, by forsaking the Work of his hands, or *annihilating* us; nor vindicate his injur'd Authority, by upholding our Being only to render us miserable, and by treating us as his Enemies rather than as the Objects of his Favour; but on the contrary that he should still shew respect to us as the Works of his hands, by preserving our Being, by exercising Patience and Long-suffering towards us, by encompassing us with many Temporal Favours, and
Heb. 10. 20. by opening and *consecrating a New and Living way*, whereby we might return to him, by proposing to us Terms of Peace
Col. 1. 20. and Reconciliation *by the Blood of the*
Eph. 4. 23. *Cross*; and by offering to *renew us in the Spirit of our Minds*; in a word, to make

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us *New Creatures after his own Image*; Col. 3. 10.
that ſo we might be not only again intituled to thoſe former loſt Bleſſings, that were naturally ſuited to obedient Creatures of that order and rank of *Being* wherein God had plac'd us at the Beginning; but might have our Happineſs highly *improv'd*, as well as effectually *ſecur'd* by that *new* and *nearer* Relation to God through Jeſus Chriſt, which intereſſes them that believe in his Name in thoſe unconceivable Joys which he has merited: Upon which account our Creator treats thoſe that are thus reconcil'd to him, not only as his *Creatures* but as his *Children*; and ſince his only begotten Son, *whom he hath appointed Heir of all things, is not aſham'd to call them Brethren*, he refuſes not to treat 'em as *Joint-Heirs with him*, nor diſdains to be call'd their Father. Heb. 1. 2. Heb. 2. 11, 12, 13. Rom. 8. 15, 16, 17.

So that the conſideration of God, as the Author of this New and *Spiritual* Creation, lays on us the ſtrongeſt Obligation imaginable to ſerve and obey him, in that it contains both the higheſt *Reaſon* and the ſtrongeſt *Motive* of that Obedience: For as it is very *reaſonable* that we ſhould obey him that has Wiſdom and

Power enough to change and reform, and render happy such sinful, deprav'd and miserable Creatures as we are, so 'tis the greatest *Good* that can be done us, and therefore is to be earnestly sought at the hands of the infinitely gracious God: and seeing he is so liberal as to offer *to give his holy Spirit*, the Principle of all Grace and Spiritual Life, *to them that* sincerely *ask* and diligently seek it of him; here is the greatest *Motive* and encouragement to engage us in his Service, since (I say) he is not become inexorable by our Sins, but still *waits to be gracious* to us, offering to *write his Law in our Hearts, and to put his Fear into our inward Parts* by the power of his Spirit, and also assuring us, that *in keeping his Commandments there is great Reward.*

Luk. 11. 13.
Isa. 30. 18.
Jer. 31. 33.
Heb. 8. 10.
Ps. 19. 11.

If therefore the *first* and *best* part of our Time is God's peculiar Claim as he has *made* us, much more ought we to offer the *first-fruits* of our Time to the Service of him who is become *reconcileable* to us in Christ Jesus, and is both able and willing to add to the Obligation of the *first*, that of a *second* and more Glorious Creation. Surely we owe not only the *first* and *best*, but the *whole* of our Time now upon

upon a new account to our Creator, ſince he has made ſuch proviſion for our Reformation, and ſo for our Happineſs, not only through the courſe of our Time *here*, but through an entire Eternity *hereafter*; which leads me to the laſt thing I have to urge from the import of the Term [*Creator*,] viz.

3. As this Title implies that God is the *Soveraign Arbiter* and *Diſpoſer* of our *Being*, becauſe this is a neceſſary conſequence of that *Relation* of Creator; it carries with it a forcible Argument to engage thoſe that are young in the Service of God. *Our Times are in his hand*, who Pſ. 31. 15. can prolong or contract them as he pleaſes; and we muſt be accountable to him for the Days he has lent us, and receive a Sentence according to our Improvement or Abuſe of them. How reaſonable is it, and how much for our Intereſt to offer that *part* of our Time to our Creator which he *peculiarly* lays claim to; nay, to conſecrate the *whole* of it to his Service, ſeeing as he is the Author of our Being he has a right to the Soveraign diſpoſal of it; and if we withhold any *part* of our Time from him, can fill up the *Remainder* of our days with pain and

ſorrow

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sorrow, or cut us off in his *Displeasure* in the midst of our days, and force us into an Eternity of Anguish and Misery? How *terrible a thing* is it thus *to fall into the hands of the Living God*, who, as he has made us, knows how to punish our *Disobedience* with all the kinds and degrees of Torment of which he has made, or can make our Nature capable! And how highly does it concern us to dedicate the Blossoms and early Fruits of our Youth to the Service of him who is able to reward our early Obedience with a long and happy Life here (if he pleases), and to fill up a whole Eternity in communicating various Pleasures to the Soul in another and better World; who knows all the kinds and degrees of Joy and Solace we either are or can be capable of, and how to give us the most ravishing Delights, and to excite in our Souls the most lively sentiments of that *Joy* which is *unspeakable and full of Glory!*

Heb. 10. 31.

1 Pet. 1. 8.

How much does it concern us to offer to the Author of our Being, the Sacrifice of the *prime* portion of our Age, seeing he is able either eternally to sustain our Bodies and Souls, by his Almighty Hand, from sinking into *Nullity*, amidst the ever-

everlaſting Torments of Hell, that ſo our Wo and Miſery (ten thouſand times worſe than Annihilation) may become eternal too! Or can uphold our Being by his *everlaſting Arms*, ſo as to give us the ſtrength and beauty of an eternal Youth both in Soul and Body, and to entertain us with the uninterrupted *Views* of his Divine Countenance, and with the conſtant *Emanations* of his Infinite Love! Who can entertain the Soul with continual Impreſſions of the higheſt Joy, without the diſſolution or enfeebling of her *Being*, or any *Faculty* that belongs to it! For he that has created us is the Soveraign diſpoſer of what he has made; and to him 'tis poſſible to make Men even to *ſee his Face and live*. Exod. 33. 20. 1 Cor. 13. 12. 1 John 3. 2.

Nor is this Duty of dedicating our Youth to the Service of our Creator, as that *Character* involves his Power to diſpoſe of us as to Happineſs or Miſery, (as he pleaſes) barely to be argued from that awful and ſtupendous *Power* and Authority; but alſo from the manifeſt diſcovery our Creator has made in this caſe, as well of his *Will* and Pleaſure, as of his Right and *Power*. For he has declar'd, That *the Wicked ſhall not live out half their* Pſal. 55. 23

Eccl. 7. 17. Eccl. 8. 12. *their days*, and that *they shall die before their Time*; that *it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, because he feareth not before God.* And he has added a promise to the *fifth* Precept of his Law, *(which is the first Command with promise)* of a long and happy Life to those that shew an early Piety by their obedience and respect to their *Natural* Parents, the Instruments of their Production, as an instance of their respect to their *Heavenly Father*, the original Author of their Being. As the Apostle well expresses it, *Children obey your Parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy Father and Mother, (which is the first Commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the Earth.* And tho God in the Wise and Mysterious way of his Providence, makes some Exceptions from these *General* Rules of extending or contracting the Time of Men in this World, sometimes suffering an *accursed Sinner to live an hundred Years*, and an early Convert to die betimes: Yet if the Vices committed in Youth be impenitently persisted in, that an eternal state of Misery will be the dreadful consequence of it;

Exod. 20. 12.

Eph. 6. 1, 2, 3.

Isa. 65, 20.

it; as on the other hand, that our Creator not only can, but certainly will reward the early Conſecration of our Time to him, with an eternal ſtate of Bliſs, cannot be doubted, by ſuch as read and give credit to the Scriptures of Truth. For as a multitude of *Threatenings* contain'd therein give aſſurance of the *former*, ſo the *latter* is no leſs confirmed by variety of great and *precious Promiſes*, which, if they aſcertain Glory to all the Saints in general, muſt not only comprehend thoſe that were ſanctified betimes, but may reaſonably raiſe their hopes to expect a *diſtinguiſhing* Reward.

And becauſe the Title of [Creator] comprehends that of a *Judg*, 'tis probable, that *Solomon*, after a Caution to Youth againſt Sin, becauſe of the certainty of the future Judgment of God, brings in the words of our Text by way of *Argument* thereupon, [Therefore remember thy Creator, *&c.*] (as we have before ſhewn it might have been tranſlated) *i. e.* becauſe he that has *made* thee, has a right to diſpoſe of thy Being, and will *judg* thee. Eccl. 11. c.

So

So that how well soever it fares with the wicked in this World, we may con-
Eccl. 8. 12. clude with the *Wise Man, Tho a Sinner do evil an hundred times* [*q. d.* repeat his Sins never so often] *and his days be prolonged*; *yet* (says he) *surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him*: and that implies a *Wo* unto the harden'd sinner, and that
Isai. 3. 11. (as the Prophet *Isaiah* speaks) *it shall be ill with him*; *for the reward of his hands shall be given him.*

From the *Reasons* included in the Term [Creator], wherein our *Relation* to God, as his Creatures, implies we are under great obligations to *remember* to love and serve him early; We pass

Secondly, To the *Arguments* insinuated in those words, which express the *proper time* of engaging in this *Duty*, viz. [*In the days of Youth before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when we shall say, we have no pleasure in them,*] wherein the *Advantages* that attend the Time of Youth, and the contrary Evils and *Impediments* that accompany Old Age, which render the former the far more eligible Time in which to begin to devote one's self

ſelf to the Service of God, are ſuggeſted. Which *Advantages* on the one hand, and *Diſadvantages* on the other, we are now to conſider.

1. Then it behoves us to dedicate our ſelves betimes to the Service of our *Creator*, becauſe the Work of *Converſion* is much more eaſily perform'd in Youth than in Old Age. And ſeeing there is a *neceſſity* of our turning to God once in our Lives, or elſe we become irrecoverably miſerable; Prudence directs to the choice of the *beſt* Time for ſo weighty a purpoſe. The *Wiſe Man* tells us, *God has made every thing beautiful in its ſeaſon*, Eccl. 3. 11. and that *there is a fit time for every Purpoſe under the Heaven*; and if all Wiſe Men are careful to chooſe a *convenient* ſeaſon for the *common* Affairs of the World, that relate only to their Temporal Intereſt, how prodigious a piece of folly muſt it be for a Man to ſuffer the *fitteſt* ſeaſon to eſcape him for the performance of that Work, which is the moſt *difficult* of all others to be well done; and upon the *due* accompliſhment of which, both his preſent and future Happineſs depends! For, Eccl. 3. 1—10.

(1.) Youth

(1.) Youth is the *best* Time for our *Conversion:* Because the Soul is not then so much vitiated by evil *Habits*, as when she has run through the several stages of Life in a continued course of Wickedness. Tho Sin is deeply enough rooted in our Nature, which is all defil'd with the Original Stain: Yet we very much fortify our corrupt Inclinations by producing them into *Act*; and by multiplying those Sinful Acts, till they become *familiar* and customary to us, and till we *drink down Iniquity like Water:* So that the *difficulty* of turning from Sin encreases together with the *Time* of our continuance in the practice of it. *Can the* Ethiopian *change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? Then may ye also do Good, that are accustomed to do Evil,* (says the Prophet.) Is it to be thought that Conversion to God is so slight and easy a matter, that *any* Time may serve for its Accomplishment? Are not the difficulties that a long *habit* of Sinning will lay in the way of that great and important Work to be fear'd? Is it not much more easy to bend a *Young* Twig than an *Aged* Oak, and to *prevent* evil Habits than to *rectify* 'em? A little observation of the World may

Job 15. 16.

Jer. 13. 23.

may suffice to inform us, that long Custom or Habit is so bewitching a thing, that scarce any thing can be imagin'd more ridiculous, absurd, and inconvenient than many things which the long usage of some *Persons*, nay of some whole *Nations*, has authoriz'd.

And if Men are so tenacious of any silly and troublesome thing which they have been much addicted to, and sacrifice their *Reason*, their *Honour* and their *Ease* to the Tyranny of *Custom*; how much more prevalent must a long habit, and course of *Sin* be, which besides its deep *rooting* in our Nature, and besides the ordinary force of *mere* Habit, has both its flattering *Promises* and Pleasures to tempt us to its Embraces, and its *Threats* and Terrors too (in suggesting all the mortifying Circumstances of a vertuous course of Life) to raise in our Minds the most frightful *Idea* of Piety and Religion. So that, if Custom and Habit in *general* be *proverbially* stil'd a Second Nature, the habit of *Sin* may of all others most fitly be so term'd: And the force of its Dominion *over* our Souls, and the difficulty of its Extirpation *out* of them, must needs have an increase pro-

Ἐγχρονίζον ἔθος φύσεως κραταιότερον ἐστι.

portionate to the Time of its *Duration* in them. Can any thing then be more evident, than that in the days of our Youth, when Sin has not yet so deeply rooted it self in our Hearts by evil *habits*, as in Old Age after a long course of Vice, in a multitude of repeated Acts, our Conversion must needs have the most *easy* and *kindly* accomplishment?

(2.) This further appears, in that the Minds of the Young are ordinarily the most capable of *Instruction*. It was a saying of a Philosopher; that *to Cure a Dead Man and Teach an Old Man, were things equally difficult*: For (tho in *some respects* Youth is sufficiently addicted to Pride, yet) there is a kind of *Natural* Modesty and becoming Humility often discernible in the Young, arising from a Consciousness of their Ignorance, and unexperience of things, which disposes them to a more *Docible* frame of Mind, than is usually to be found in Elder Persons, whose *Maturity* of Age often makes 'em unwilling to be inform'd, *especially* in matters of Religion, either because they imagin they *already* know what others may pretend to teach 'em, or because they are unwilling to undergo the shame

Νεκρὸν ἰατρεύειν, καὶ γέροντα νεθετεῖν ταυτὸν ἐστι. *Diog. Laert. Lib. 6.*

ſhame of being accounted *ſo long* ignorant of Religion, and their concern therein, which every body ought to be early acquainted with. And upon this account ('tis likely) our Saviour tells his Diſciples, that *except* they ſhould *humble themſelves and become as little Children*, they ſhould *not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, i. e. unleſs they ſhould imitate Children in Modeſty and lowlineſs of Mind; that the Senſe of their Ignorance might make 'em Teachable. Mat. 18. 3, 4.

Beſides the Minds of Youth are generally a much fitter Soil for Truth, than thoſe of the Aged, becauſe not uſually ſo over-run with the Briars and Thorns of ſtrong and deeply rooted *Prejudices*. The Soul of Man will not long remain empty, if it be not early *ſtor'd* with Truth, 'twill be gradually *ſtuff'd* with Errors; and as 'tis much more troubleſome to alter and correct a Writing full of *Nonſenſe* and Confuſion, by much razing out and interlining, than to write a handſome piece of good *Senſe* on a blank Paper: So it is abundantly harder to inſtruct or rectify a Mind long preposſeſs'd with Falſhood, than to make deep impreſſions of Truth on a Soul

more simple and unprejudic'd; which, if empty of *Knowledg*, yet is not fill'd with *Error*, which as it has not yet learn'd to judg *right* of things, so neither has been much us'd to judg *wrong*; and if not *happy* enough to be well stock'd with *good* Notions, yet is not so *unhappy* as to be crowded with *bad* ones.

John 4. 24. Rom. 1. 9. 1 Tim. 4. 8.

Now seeing to capacitate us to serve God, who *is a Spirit*, and therefore will be serv'd *with our Spirits*, (without which *Bodily Exercise profiteth little*) there are many great Truths to be learned; and tho he has promis'd the help of his Holy *Spirit* to reveal these to the simple, yet seeing he requires us to be diligent in the investigation of Truth, and very attentive to the Voice of *Reason* and *Scripture* to that End, 'tis easy to see by reflecting on what has been just now said, That the Young, whose Minds are yet unform'd, have a mighty advantage above the Aged for learning the knowledg of the ways of God, and for obtaining a more copious and solid understanding of Truth: So that we may well say with the Prophet, (tho perhaps he speaks in another sense)

Prov. 8. Psal. 4. 4. John 5. 39.

Whom

Whom ſhall he teach Knowledg? And whom ſhall he make to underſtand Doctrine? Them that are wean'd from the Milk, and drawn from the Breaſts. Iſa. 28. 9

(3.) Again, there is a certain *Tenderneſs* of Spirit attending our firſt Years, and not ordinarily to be found afterwards, which renders Converſion more feaſible. The Heart is more malleable, and more eaſily receives Impreſſions from the Promiſes and Threatnings recorded in the *Word* of God, and from the Mercies and Judgments diſtributed in the World by his *Providence*. Therefore we find few Perſons, whoſe Education has given them any tolerable means of the knowledg of Divine things, who do not remember themſelves to have been much affected in their Youth in attending to the Word of God, or in obſerving ſome remarkable Paſſages of his Providence. If deep *Conviction* is a great ſtep towards Converſion, Experience ſhews this is moſt eaſily wrought on one that is young: How often do we ſee ſuch a one weep at a tranſient glance on *Death* and *Judgment* (in a Sermon), or at a general reflection on the *Sufferings* of Chriſt for

Sinners, while the cered Consciences of those that have been long harden'd in Sin hold proof against the most pathetick and awakening Discourses of the certainty of Death, the dismal Circumstances that attend a Sinner at the approach of it, and the great consequences that depend on that amazing Change, or against the most lively description of the most Cruel and unexampled Sufferings wherewith our Blessed Saviour was tormented for our Redemption? That makes no impression on the *Adamantine* Heart of the latter, which is often found to effect a deep compunction of Mind in the former; and the Eyes of the one can hardly be kept open by a Discourse that dissolves those of the other into Tears. The affections of *Fear* and *Hope*, *Joy*, *Sorrow*, *Compassion*, and the like, more easily move the tender Minds of Youth, and consequently make way for lasting impressions of Piety, to the purposes of which these Affections, when guided and regulated by an enlighten'd Mind, do mightily conduce.

(4.) The *Zeal* and Resolution which the warm Temper of Youth engages them in, for what they embrace, renders

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a thorough Conversion to God more easy to them than to the old; who by having either tasted much of the Afflictions of the World *themselves*, or by having been Witnesses to the Miseries of many *others*, often retain so terrible an *Idea* of Worldly Troubles, that the Mortification and Self-denial prescrib'd to the followers of Christ, gives them a strange disgust for a strictly Religious Life: Besides the abatement of their natural heat and vigour, (a good degree of which is useful to any great enterprize) makes 'em with the Sluggard continually complain of *a Lion in the way*. But the Young who have not been so baulk'd with Disappointments, nor *felt* or *seen* so many Miseries, and who have also a great *sense* of Honour, and are commonly ambitious of high Atchievements, and *disdain* to have their Attempts defeated, are hereby dispos'd more readily to take up the Cross of Christ, and to *fight the good fight of Faith, that they may lay hold on Eternal Life*. Add to this, that that Disease of *Covetousness*, that so often attends the Aged, who from experience either in themselves or others, of the difficulty of *getting* and *keeping*, and the

Prov. 22. 13.

1 Tim. 6. 12.

danger of *losing*, and the inconveniency of *wanting* the things of this World, become more tenacious of them *then* when they are neareſt the unavoidable neceſſity of *parting* with them; that this Diſeaſe (I ſay) which is *the root of all evil, which is Idolatry*, and therefore oppoſite to the true Service of God, and which renders it almoſt *impoſſible for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, does not ſo uſually reign amongſt the Young (who are rather apt to run into the contrary extreme) ſo that their motion in the ways of God, is not clog'd with this dead weight, which ſo mightily incumbers thoſe whoſe Hearts have taken deeper root in the Earth. Thus we ſee how much more eaſy the Work of Converſion is likely to be, when we engage in it in our tender Years, than if we defer it to Old Age.

1 Tim. 6. 10. Col. 3. 5. Mat. 19. 23, 25, 26.

But all this while I would not be thought to make the work of Converſion, conſider'd as the *Act* of God, (who alone can *turn* a Soul *from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan to himſelf*) to be more difficult in one *Subject* than another, for all things are equally poſſible to him; but I have hereby made

Act. 26. 18.

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an Eſſay to ſhew that the Heart of an old Sinner is a *Subject* much more *untractable* and obſtinate in it ſelf, than that of one, who (by reaſon of his Youth) is yet but a *Novice* in Vice? That the work of Mortification and Sanctification is commonly begun with leſs difficulty, and carried on with more eaſe and ſpeed on the Young than on the Old, and that a greater *degree* of Grace is neceſſary to reform the latter than the former; and whether the Almighty will grant ſuch an extraordinary meaſure of his Grace to one that is grown old in wickedneſs, may well be doubted (as we ſhall ſhew hereafter.)

Since then the work of Converſion is of the greateſt conſequence, as it is for our trueſt intereſt both in *this* World and that *to come*, certainly it ought to be perform'd in Youth, ſeeing that is the moſt ſeaſonable Time, as will further appear,

2. In that much *Good* is *loſt*, and much *Evil contracted* by deferring our Converſion to Old Age; but much *Evil* (on the contrary) is *prevented*, and much *Good obtain'd*, through the Courſe of our days, by an early turning to God.

(1.)

(1.) Much *Sin* is *prevented*, and consequently much *Spiritual good obtain'd* by an early Conversion, which will appear to be no small advantage: For seeing Sin, as it is directly opposite to the pure Nature of God, is the worst of Evils, and seeing the *Excellency* or *Vileness* of a Creature is to be measur'd by its *likeness* or *contrariety* to God, who possesses absolute perfection in himself; it necessarily follows, that nothing can so deform a Creature, nothing can so defile it, nothing can debase it so much, and set it at so great a distance from Excellency and Perfection, as Sin does. It must then certainly be our Interest to break off our Sins by an early Repentance; since every sinful *Act*, and much more a continuance in a *course* of Sin, does so much corrupt, debase, and deform the Soul. And if we desire the meliorating of our Nature, and would become more *excellent* Creatures than we are, instead of degenerating and becoming *worse*: It highly concerns us to begin early to extirpate that which has strip'd the Soul of much of her *Intellectual* and (which is worse) of her *Moral* Excellency; and will render her, by so much the more

Vile,

Vile, by how much the *longer* we indulge it; and to devote our selves betimes to Religion and Holiness, which is the principal Beauty and Glory of a Rational Soul, and that which chiefly makes a Man resemble his Creator.

(2.) Much *Sorrow* and *Trouble* is hereby *prevented*, and much *Joy* and *Pleasure obtain'd* and *secur'd*. For tho' some Examples may be found of Wicked Men, who in respect of their Temporal prosperity for a little Time, may be said to *spread themselves like a Green Bay-Tree*; Psal. 37. 35. *not to be in Trouble like other Men, and* Psal. 73. 5, 6, 7, &c. *to have more than Heart could wish*: Yet God does not leave himself without witness of his Displeasure against Sin, in that he often *wounds the heads of his Enemies, and the hairy Scalps of them that go on still* Psal. 68. 21. *in their Trespasses*, by signal Judgments in this World, as all Places and Ages can testify. Nor has the Divine Providence been wanting to signalize the Righteous by frequent Instances of peculiar Temporal Blessings, which it has conferr'd on them. However, the Anguish of a guilty and self-accusing *Conscience*, which the Wicked often labour under, together with the *common* and unavoidable *Afflictions*

flictions of this World, which make a very deep Impression upon them, whose *Appetites* are fierce and *eager* after sensual pleasure (their *hope being only in this Life*) and whose Passions soon fall into a violent *Ferment*, because they want the Holy Art of allaying the heat of them by serious Reflections on the Soveraignty, Justice, Wisdom, and Goodness of that God, whose Providence governs the Universe; these things I say occasion them abundance of Grief and Trouble, which one that becomes an early Convert to Holiness avoids; who besides the joyous Testimony of a *good Conscience*, that gives a *Relish* to all his Temporal Comforts, and takes away the *sting* of all his outward Trials, is so *mortified* to this World, and rais'd so far above the Interests of it, by a *lively hope* of Eternal Bliss; and is so thoroughly convinc'd of the good *Conduct* of the Divine Governour of the World, that he finds no such great reluctancy in himself to submit to the Will of God, when he is pleas'd to afflict him. In a word, if it be both *an evil and a bitter thing* to go on in a Course of Sin; and if all God's *Ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his Paths are Peace*; it must needs

Jer. 2. 19.

Prov. 3. 17.

needs be a mighty advantage to enter betimes into ſo ſweet and delightful a Walk.

3. The *Evils* of Old Age (if we arrive to that) are *aggravated* by deferring Converſion till then; but *alleviated* and render'd tolerable by an early Piety. If he that neglects in the Time of his *Youth* and *Strength* to make proviſion for the Time of *Age* and *Sickneſs*, when he has a fair opportunity of doing it, is juſtly cenſur'd as inconſiderate and imprudent; becauſe he takes not care to prepare that which might give him ſome Relief *then*, when many Infirmities will certainly encompaſs him, and the neglect of which will inhance his Miſery: Then to neglect to turn to God in Youth is a Folly of the groſſeſt kind; becauſe nothing can tend ſo much to ſupport us under the preſſure of the many Evils that attend Old Age; nothing can tend to take off ſo much of the *weight* of that *Burden*, as an early Converſion; and nothing can make thoſe Miſeries ſo *grievous*, as the neglect of it. For

(1.) By an early Converſion a large *ſtock* of Grace, and of Experience, is *treaſur'd up*, which mightily ſtrengthens the

the Soul under the burden of Age: A long *Habit* of Mortification to Sensual Things, will render Carnal Pleasures
1 Cor. 15. 31. insipid; and he that *dies daily* to the World, in the Time of Youth, when it appears most aimable and charming, will not feel much regret in his Mind, when he finds *Old Age* has almost quite taken away the relish of those perishing Sweets; since *Reason* and *Religion* had long before allay'd the keeness of his Appetite to them. The long and good use he has made of his *Spiritual* Senses, makes him patient under the decay of his *Natural* ones. What tho' (as *Solomon*
Eccl. 12. 3. V. 5. phrases it) *the Keepers of the House tremble, and the strong Men bow themselves; and fears be in the way*? &c. How can this
2 Cor. 4. 16. make him unhappy, whose *inward Man has been renew'd day by day*, even before *his outward Man decay'd*; who therefore
Eph. 6. 10. is become *strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might*, which *strengthens*
Isai. 35. 3, 4. *the weak hands and confirms the feeble knees, and makes them that are of a fearful*
Eccl. 12. 3. *heart strong*? What if *those that look out at the Windows be darkned*? How can Dimness, or even *loss of Sight*, render him miserable, who through the course

of

of his Life has endeavour'd to be *blind* to thoſe Objects that might tempt him to Sin, having *made a Covenant with his Eyes* to guard himſelf from it; and has conſtantly pray'd that God would *turn them away from beholding Vanity?* How can he be much concern'd at the want of *Natural Light*, who has been long accuſtom'd to ſee things that are *inviſible* by the piercing *Eye of Faith?* How can he be much diſcontented at the decay of the once quick Senſation of his *Palate*, or at the want of *Appetite* to his Food; who has ſo often *taſted*, and ſtill taſtes *that the Lord is Gracious?* Tho' *all the Daughters of Muſick be brought low*; How ſhould *Deafneſs* be an intolerable grievance to him; who has often *heard*, and ſtill hears the *ſtill and ſmall Voice* of the *Spirit* of God ſpeaking in his Conſcience, and *teſtifying with his Spirit that he is* one of *the Children of God?* How can the Obſtructions that the *Organs* of *Speech* ſuffer, which render his Voice weak, and *Unmuſical*, diſcourage him, who knows that as his *Praiſes* and *Prayers* have often been *Melodious* in the Ears of God, ſo they ſtill are very pleaſant to him, who chiefly minds the Tuneable frame

Job 31. 1.
Pſal. 119. 37.
Heb. 11. 1. and v. 27.
Pſal. 34. 8. 1 Pet. 2. 3
Eccl. 12. 4.
1 Kings 19. 12.
Rom. 8. 16.
Cant. 2. 14.
Prov. 15. 8.

Eccl. 12. 2. frame of the *Heart?* And tho' *the Sun and the Light, and the Moon and the Stars be darken'd,* &c. How can the Infirmities that impair the *Understanding,* and *Judgment,* the *Fancy* and *Memory,* &c. be insupportable to him, who has 1 Tim. 3. 16. John 17. 3. 1 John 5. 20. long understood the *Great Mystery of Godliness,* so as *to know the only True God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, which is Life Eternal:* Who has receiv'd an *indelible* impression of this *Knowledg* in Jer. 31. 33. his Mind; and has the *Law of God* deeply engraven *on his Heart:* And whose long *experience* of the Divine Goodness, makes him with Holy Confidence still 2 Tim. 1. 12. say, with the Apostle, *I know whom I have believ'd,* — and with the Aged Psalmist; Psal. 71. 5. *Thou art my Hope, O LORD God, Thou art my Trust from my Youth?* Who (however weak his Memory is as Psal. 119. 16. to other things, yet) still *remembers his Creator,* and *will not forget his Word:* Nay tho all the *Evils* and Infirmities of Old Age, which the wise Man enumerates after our Text, attack him, and threaten a speedy Dissolution of the Rom. 7. 24. Frame of his Body: How can this dis- 2 Cor. 5. 1—8. spirit him, who has long *groan'd* for deliverance from that *Earthly Tabernacle,* that

that he might be rid of thoſe remains of *Sin* that lurk in it: And has often wiſh'd that this Vail of Mortal Fleſh were rent aſunder, becauſe he knows it hinders him from *ſeeing God Face to Face*; who has ſo familiariz'd the Grave to himſelf, by frequent Meditations on the *Victory* his Saviour has obtain'd over it; and is ſo well perſwaded of that Bleſſed Reſurrection which his *lively hope* has long acquainted him with, that he can look into the Gloomy *Valley of the ſhadow of Death* without Conſternation, and chearfully *commit his Spirit into the hands of God, as his Faithful Creator*; who as *he has guided him by his Counſel*, ſo (he knows) *will receive him to Glory.*

1 Cor. 15. 54—57. 1 Pet. 1. 3. Pſal. 23. 4. 1 Pet. 4. 19. Pſal. 73. 24.

But on the other ſide; if Converſion be deferr'd to Old Age, theſe and the like Advantages of a long *Exerciſe* of Grace, and of a large Spiritual *Experience* being wanting, how difficult will it be for a weak *Mind* and a languiſhing *Body* to bear up under thoſe preſſing Miſeries that will then attend them? And it will be no ſmall Affliction to a late Penitent, even after his Converſion, to think on his Imprudent neglect of early laying up this Spiritual Proviſion, againſt thoſe

Evil days of Age, and Weakness, when the Soul stands in so much need of it,

(2.) An *early* Conversion has greater *Characters* of *Sincerity* and Truth than a *late* one; and thereby administers great *Ease* and Comfort amidst the *Infirmities* of Age. For, as the true Peace and Comfort of the Soul results from the good and safe posture wherein she finds her self: So according to the *Evidence* or *Obscurity* of the proofs a Man finds in himself of the reality of his Conversion to God; the more *stable* or *wavering* is his Hope and Comfort. Now those that have been converted in their Youth, have usually much clearer Evidences of the Truth of their Conversion, than they who have been reclaim'd from Sin by a late Repentance: And therefore the Joy of the *former* commonly far surpasses that of the *latter*.

How often does the disturb'd and doubtful Mind of a late Penitent, thus commune with her self: I find indeed an *unwonted Sorrow* in my self on the account of Sin; But how shall I be assur'd that 'tis a *Godly Sorrow, that works a Repentance to Salvation not to be repented of*? Is it not wholly from a *fear* of the Evil of *Punishment*,

2 Cor. 7. 10.

Punishment, and not at all from the *Sense* of the Evil of *Sin*? Not because I have violated the *Law* of God, but only because I have render'd my self obnoxious to the *Curse* of it? Is it not rather because I have weaken'd my *Body*, and hasten'd Old Age by my Vices; than because I've defil'd my *Soul*, and enfeebled her Powers by them? I feel in my self some *Abhorrence* and Aversion from the Sins I formerly took *Pleasure* in; But is this the Effect of the sickness of my *Soul*, or of the Distempers of my *Body*? Mat. 9. 1.. Do I really loath my former disorders, and is Temperance my *choice*? Is it not rather the *weakness* of my Appetite, and the *decay* of my Palate, that makes me abstemious? I delight not in *sensual Mirth* and Jollity as formerly: But may I not justly question, whether this does not more proceed from the *weakness* of my *Fancy*, than from the *tenderness* of my *Conscience*, and the *rectitude* of my *Will*? I seem somewhat *mortified* to the things of the *World*: But is not this rather a kind of *Natural* than a *Moral* Death? A dying to the World of *Necessity* and not of *Choice*? Do I forsake it because 'tis *unworthy* of my Love; and not rather,

ther, because it has first forsaken me; and is *uncapable* of affording me its former Pleasures, now the Evil days of Old Age have overtaken me? I find in my Soul an earnest *desire* after Holiness: Is it because I take delight in *pleasing* God; or only because I *fear* to suffer the weight of his *Displeasure?* Is it because I have a mind to live a Holy *Life*, now when the *best*, and almost the *whole* of my Time is spent; or only that I may *die the Death of the Righteous, and that my last end may be like his?* I am now willing to *devote* my self to the Service of God: But why have I not done it long before, when I had *Time* and *Strength*, and other Advantages to serve him with? Is it not rather to serve a turn of my *own*, than to serve *him*, that I offer my self so late to his Service? Have I not Reason to doubt whether I am sincerely willing to choose my blessed Lord, as my *Head* and *Ruler*, as well as my *Sanctuary* and *Saviour?* And whether I am willing to be *purified* as well as *redeem'd*, to be *sanctified* by his Grace, as well as *justified* by his Righteousness? *The Heart is deceitful above all things*; And how shall I be assur'd that I do not deceive

Num. 23. 10.

Jer. 17. 9.

ceive my ſelf about the ſafety of my Soul?

Theſe and ſuch like Thoughts often occaſion great Heſitations in the Mind of an Aged Convert, and make him doubt of the *ſincerity* of his Heart, and of the *ſecurity* of his State.

Whereas, on the other hand, He who after an *Initiation* in the Service of God in *Youth*, and a *Proficiency* therein thro' the Time of his *Strength*, is at laſt arriv'd to a good Old Age, may greatly ſolace himſelf in ſcanning over the *Marks* and Proofs of the Truth and *Reality* of his Converſion, which are Great and Numerous.

He deeply *mourn'd* for Sin at an Age when Sorrow and Penſiveneſs ſeem moſt unſeaſonable in the Judgment of the World; and when the warmth of the Imagination and the briskneſs of the Senſes diſpoſe moſt to Carnal *Mirth*: He *loath'd* Sin, when it ſeem'd moſt *Charming*, and deny'd himſelf its Senſual *Pleaſures*, at an Age when they have the higheſt *Guſt*; and when their evil *Conſequences* almoſt quite diſappear thro' their great ſuppoſed *Diſtance*. He *forſook* the World, when 'twas juſt ſpread-

ing its *Charms* before him, and making its Court to him after the most obliging
Matt. 5. 6. Manner. He *hunger'd and thirsted after Righteousness*, at a Time when it had the most Affliction and *Bitterness* attending it; and dedicated himself to God *then*, when he had a large prospect of hard *Services* and *Sufferings* to undergo for his sake.

And accordingly his *Life* since his Conversion yields a multitude of Instances that prove the *sincerity* of it. The proof of his *Faith in* God, and of his *Love to* him, has been like that of Gold and Silver in the melting Furnace, amidst various temptations. He has had occasion to give ample proofs of his Fi-
Heb. 2. 10. delity to the *Captain of his Salvation*, by having long warr'd under his Banner: And has Reason to believe himself to have been truly converted in his Youth; since all the flattering Sweets, and *Pleasures* of the World could never *seduce* him; nor all the threatning Frowns, and *Troubles* of it *terrify* him into a change of his Resolution for the Service of his God. And his having held out
Heb. 3. 14. *so long*, gives him hope that *he shall hold out to the end*; and since he finds his

Faith

Faith has on it the Character of [*unfeigned*], his *Joy* muſt needs abound; when he conſiders, that he that is the *Author of that Faith, is the Finiſher of it* too: That he that long ago *began*, and hath long *cheriſh'd* the Work of Grace in his Soul, *will carry it on until the Day of Jeſus Chriſt*: And that as he has the evident *Signs* of Faith in the *Sanctification* of his Heart; ſo he ſhall have the *end* of it too in the Salvation of his *Soul*. And it hence follows, 2 Tim. 1. 5. Heb. 12. 2. Philip. 1. 6. 1 Pet. 1. 9.

(3.) That an *early* Converſion furniſhes Old Age with comfortable *Reflections* on Time *paſt*; and on the contrary the *thoughts* of an ill-ſpent Life are then moſt grievous, when we are near the *Cloſe* of it. What a dreadful thing muſt it be for an Old Man, *whoſe Bones are full of the Sins of his Youth*, to look back upon his former courſe of Life! Suppoſe him a late Penitent of the *Eleventh Hour*; and that God is pleas'd even then to indulge him a Pardon. With what horror will he review his Life! What a loathſome ſink of Abominations muſt he rake into! What innumerable Evils will he ſee himſelf encompaſs'd with! And with what a mighty Job 20. 11. Mat. 20. 6.

weight will they press his Soul! Is it likely that that God whom he has so long *wearied with his Iniquities*, and Mal. 2.17. Am. 2.13. press'd with his Sins, *as a Cart is press'd with Sheaves*, will shew him Mercy now, without giving him a taste how *Bitter* as Jer. 2. 19. well as how *Evil* a thing Sin is? And without shewing him that, if he be 1 Cor. 3. 15. *sav'd*, it shall be *so as by Fire?* Is it strange if that God to whose *Calls* he has been long deaf, and from whose Reproofs and Counsels he has so often turned away, should suffer him to call a while in the Distress and Bitterness of his Soul, before he condescends to give him an *answer of Peace?*

And seeing it is the ordinary course of the Almighty, when he converts Men, first to impress their Minds with great Horrour from the sense of Sin; as well to make 'em *loath* and consequently to *forsake* their Vices, as to make 'em highly *value* his Favour, and adore his pardoning Grace; it seems necessary in an ordinary way, that an old and harden'd Sinner should undergo the *Terror of the* 2 Cor. 5. 11. *Lord* to a high degree, because the long time he has spent in the service of Sin, gives him so great an occasion of Remorse, when

when his Conſcience is once enlighten'd and awaken'd; and becauſe to extirpate theſe long and deep *habits* of Sin, there is need of a kind of violent Turn in the Soul. For as the *evil Spirit* tore the poor Man (in the Goſpel) when forc'd to leave him; ſo 'tis not uſual that Sin leaves a Man, of whoſe Soul it has had a long poſſeſſion, without occaſioning great convulſions of Mind, and as it were, rending the Soul in pieces: And how hard will this be to be endur'd, at a time when *the Spirit of a Man can* ſcarce *bear the* common *Infirmities* of Age? *Who* then *can bear a wounded Spirit?* Mark 1. 26. Prov. 18. 14.

And when theſe terrors of Mind are over, and theſe pangs of Conſcience that give hope of a *new Birth* are ſucceeded with ſome Peace that follows that happy Change; yet who knows how *far* it may be allay'd, and how *often* interrupted by reiterated Scruples and Fears? And how *long* the Soul that has been ſo violently mov'd may retain her doubtful Vibrations, after ſuch aſtoniſhing Impreſſions of Divine Wrath, in a time when even *Natural* Infirmities render the Mind weak and timorous; and when the John 3. 3. Eccl. 12. 5.

the *King of Terrors*, who daily expects the Aged, loudly alarms the tremulous Soul to prepare speedily to pass into Eternity, the near approach of which mighty Change must needs add terror to every Scruple; and when Satan a subtle Adversary (of whose *Devices*, for want of experience, *he is* in a great measure *ignorant*) shoots his *fiery* and invenom'd *Darts* to *weaken* the Hope, and to *heighten* the Fears, and to *increase* the Troubles of the Soul? Who knows (I say) what gloomy and dark Intervals these things may occasion? 'Tis true, God can surmount all these Difficulties by proportionate effusions of his Grace, and can fill such a Soul (if he pleases) with unspeakable Joy. But is it likely that he should indulge those with the highest and most uncommon Privileges, that hold out longest in Rebellion against him? And may such reasonably expect he will go out of his ordinary Methods to *meet* them, that have all their Life past *gone astray* from him? And that he will bestow the *sealing* Evidences of his Holy *Spirit* on them to a degree which he does not always allow his early Disciples, and those that have long follow'd him?

2 Cor. 2. 11.

Eph. 5. 16.

him? May it not rather be thought, That *tho* God ſhould *forgive their Iniquities,* Pſal. 99.8. *he'll take Vengeance of their Inventions?* That tho they ſhould *die in the Lord,* Rev. 14.13 they'll ſet in a Cloud, and go to the Grave with *Hezekiah*'s Lamentation, when under the ſenſe of the Wrath of God, and under puniſhment for his Sins: *I reckon'd* (ſays he) *till Morning, that as a Lion he will break all my Bones: From Day even to Night wilt thou make an end of me. Like a Crane or a Swallow; ſo did I chatter, I did mourn as a Dove: Mine Eyes fail with looking upward, O LORD, I am oppreſſed, undertake for me. What ſhall I ſay? He hath both ſpoken unto me, and himſelf hath done it; I ſhall go ſoftly all my Years in the bitterneſs of my Soul.* Iſai. 38. 13, 14, 15. And with that of *Job*; *Thou writeſt bitter things againſt me, and makeſt me to poſſeſs the iniquities of my Youth.* Is it ſtrange, if, as they have conſum'd their *Time* in Sin, and have grown old in Wickedneſs, their *Eyes* ſhould be *conſum'd with grief and wax old with Sorrow?* And if, as they have *wallow'd* long in *Vice*, ſo they ſhould be made to *ſwim* long in *Tears*, and *to water their Couches with* continual *weeping?* Job 13.26. Pſal. 6. 7. v. 6.

But

But what a comfortable Review of his Life may an early Convert take in old Age? What joy to look back on that ſolemn *Oblation* of the firſt-fruits of his Time which he made to God, and on the early *favour* which God expreſs'd to him! To *remember the kindneſs of his Youth, and the love of his Eſpouſals*, which even God himſelf delights to remember! To turn over the large Volumes of his Experience, to look on paſt Temptations and Conflicts; theſe Reflections will give him a pleaſure as much beyond that of an antient *Sailor*, when he thinks on the many *Rocks* and *Sands* and *Storms* he has eſcap'd, and that of a valiant *Soldier*, when he recollects how many *Dangers* he has paſt, and how many *Victories* he has obtain'd; as he conceives the intereſt of the *Soul* is beyond that of the *Body*, and that *Eternal* Life is to be valued above *Temporal*. With what Admiration mixt with Joy will he be fill'd, when he calls to mind what God has done for him! For tho the failings of his Life (*ſince no Man lives and ſins not*) give him occaſion of *Godly Sorrow* and Humiliation, yet theſe will not hinder a Religious *Joy* from reigning in his Soul, from his happy

Jer. 2. 2.

2 Chron. 6. 36.

Eccl. 7. 20.

py experience of the Mercy of his God; which will make him with the Apoſtle, Rom. 7. glory *in the Grace of God* in the midſt of his Contrition, and (tho in himſelf *he is nothing*) will make him ſay with the *Pſalmiſt, By my God I have run through a Troop, and by my God I have leaped over a Wall!* With what delight will he recollect the ſignal favours of the Divine Providence that beautify the Hiſtory of his Life! How his God *has ſpread his Table, and fill'd his Cup in the preſence of his Enemies*; and has *made both his Rod and his Staff co comfort him.* With how much pleaſure will he turn his Mind to the Houſe of God, to think how often he has *gone* thither *with the voice of Joy and Praiſe, with the Multitude that kept Holiday!* How oft he has *beheld the Beauty of the LORD*, while he has been *enquiring in his Temple!* How he has been *ſtay'd with Flagons, and comforted with Apples*, when *ſick of Love* to his Saviour! How he has *ſat down with great delight under his ſhadow*, while *his Fruit* has been *ſweet to his Taſte:* How he has been *ſatiated as with marrow and fatneſs*, when his Soul has *hungred after Righteouſneſs:* How he has often diſburden'd his Mind by

24, 25. 2 Cor. 12. 9, 11. Pſa. 18. 29. Pſal. 23. 5. v. 4. Pſal. 42. 4. Pſal. 27. 4. Cant. 2. 5. v. 3. Pſal. 63. 5. Mat. 5. 6.

by pouring out his Complaints into the Boſom of his Heavenly Father; how he has often receiv'd an anſwer of Peace, ſometimes *beyond* his Hope, nay *beyond* his Deſire, and ſometimes even *before* his Prayer: What precious Seaſons of communion with God he has enjoy'd, when retired into ſome corner alone to worſhip him: What fervent deſires he has then felt; what earneſt aſpirations of his Soul after him! What ſmiles of the Divine Love have on ſuch occaſions *chear'd* his Spirit; what *ſealings* of the Holy *Spirit* have *aſſur'd* his Faith: What proſpect he has had of *him that is inviſible*; *What Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory!*

Iſai. 65. 24.
2 Cor. 1. 22.
Eph. 1. 13.
Heb. 11. 27.
1 Pet. 1. 8.

Such Reflections will even make the Soul forget her temporal Afflictions, and render the burden of Age ſupportable. Theſe Thoughts will obviate fears and temptations, and inſpire the Mind with holy Courage and Reſolution, and furniſh her with Arguments for Prayer, like that of the Pſalmiſt. *I will go in the ſtrength of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of thy Righteouſneſs, even of thine only. O God, thou haſt taught me from my Youth; and hitherto have I decla-*

Pſal. 71. 15, 17, 18.

red

ted thy wondrous Works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed; O God forsake me not, &c.

In a word, Tho every Man has occasion to be humbled for his Sins, and that, in every part of his Life, it must needs be a *great*, and next to the Light of God's Countenance through the face of Jesus Christ, the *greatest* occasion of Joy in the World; when a Man can lie down in the Grave in Peace, with the satisfaction of having made Religion the great Business of his Life, of having *serv'd his Generation faithfully by the Will of God*, having from his Youth *exercised himself in this, to have a Conscience always void of offence both toward God and towards Men:* When at the shutting up of his Days, he can, by the Grace of God, safely appeal both to him and to Men, as aged *Samuel* did; *Behold----I am old and gray-headed----and I have walk'd before you from my Childhood unto this day: Behold here I am, witness against me before the Lord, and before his Anointed: Whose Ox have I taken? Or whose Ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received any Bribe, to blind my Eyes therewith?*

Acts 13. 36. Act. 24. 16

1 Sam. 12. 2, 3.

with? &c. And as he that has serv'd God from his Youth can look *back* with Pleasure, so he may look *forward* with exceeding Joy. For,

(4.) An *early* Conversion furnishes old Age with much more comfort than a *late* one, in that it usually gives a *brighter* and more glorious *prospect* of Reward in the *other Life*.

As *this Life* is not valuable, but as it may be improv'd in order to a *better*; so the strong and well-grounded Hope of eternal Bliss in the World to come, is that which sweetens the most bitter Afflictions of a Christian here, and makes him as much *more happy* as he is *more excellent than his Neighbour* (where-as if his *Hope were only in this Life*, he would be *of all Men the most miserable.*) And a Man's true Happiness in *this* World is therefore to be measur'd by the strength and liveliness of his Faith and Hope for the Blessings of the *other*; for by *these* he receives an *Earnest* of the Heavenly Possession, and has some *foretastes* of that Glory, with which he expects in a little time to be *fully* satisfied. For every one knows that there is pleasure in *hoping* for any thing that we think

Prov. 12. 26.
1 Cor. 15. 19.

think will add to our Happineſs, eſpecially when that Hope is thought to be well *founded*, and the things expected of great *conſequence*, and *ſpeedily* to be obtain'd: With what an extraordinary Joy then muſt the Hope of everlaſting Bliſs and Glory inſpire him that firmly believes he ſhall ſuddenly enjoy it! And that this Hope makes a Saint the moſt happy Man even in this Life is evident, ſome of the *Enemies* of Religion *themſelves being Judges.* 'Tis worth remarking, that an *Eminent* Perſon, (who was one of the greateſt *Sinners*, as well as one of the greateſt *Penitents* of this Age) even while he maintain'd his Atheiſtical Principles, and led a moſt flagitious Courſe of Life, confeſs'd, That " whether the Buſineſs of Re- " ligion was true or not, he thought " thoſe who had the Perſwaſions of it, " and lived ſo that they had quiet in " their Conſciences, and believed God " govern'd the World, and acquieſced " in his Providence, and had the Hope " of an endleſs Bleſſedneſs in another " State, the happieſt Men in the World: " And ſaid, He would give all that he " was Maſter of, to be under thoſe

The late E. of Roch- *ſter, ſet his Life wrote by Dr.* Bur- *net, p. 68.*

" Persuasions, and to have the Supports " and Joys that must needs flow from " them. So Just a Thought had he even *then* of the *Joy* of a Good Conscience, and the Pleasure which the bare *Expectation* of future Glory in Heaven occasions, that he thought it far out-ballanc'd *the pleasures of Sin, which are* but *for a season*; and thus does *Religion* triumph over her Enemies, extorting from their own Mouths a plain Acknowledgment of what the *Psalmist* assures, that *Happy is the People, whose God is the LORD.*

Psal. 144. 15.

Now it cannot be expected, that a *late* Convert should have an equal portion of this Hope and Joy, with one that has *fear'd the Lord from his Youth.* The former is commonly exercis'd with greater and more frequent Doubts concerning his Interest in eternal Glory than the *latter*; and the Eye of his Faith is often too weak to read his Evidences for it; because (as we have shewn before) he is apt to question the truth of his *Regeneration*, without which, he knows, *no Man can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* And this makes him often thus reason with himself: *Eye* (indeed) *hath*

1 Kings 18. 12.

John 3. 3, 4, 5.

1 Cor. 2. 9.

not

not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither have enter'd into the Heart of Man the things which God hath prepar'd for them that love him. But I fear I ſhall fall ſhort of the Glory of God, becauſe I queſtion the ſincerity of my *Love* to him. Is not this *fulneſs of Joy* reſerv'd for them that have *naufeated* the Pleaſures of this World, with which I have glutted my ſenſual Appetite, even from my Infancy? Are not thoſe *Rivers of pleaſure at the right hand of God*, only to refreſh his diligent Servants that have born the *burden and heat of the day* in labouring and ſuffering for him? May not I, who have ſpent my Days in Vanity and Sin, *in Rioting and Drunkenneſs, in Chambering and Wantonneſs*; and who now am incapacitated either to *do* or *ſuffer* much for God, juſt at the *Period* of my Days, juſtly fear being excluded from the participation of this Bliſs? Is it likely that theſe Joys that are ſo *ſpiritual* and *refined*, will be poured into ſuch a Soul as mine (when parted from this languiſhing Body) which has been *debauch'd* and *corrupted* for ſo many Years, with the baſe and ſordid delights of Sin? Or may I preſume to depoſite this *vile* and mould-

Pſa. 16. 11.

Rom. 13. 13.

dering Carcase in the Grave, in hope of having it render'd a *Glorious* Body *at the Resurrection of the Just*; when I have through the *Best* of my time abus'd it to the *Vilest* purposes of Sensuality and Vice? Shall these *Eyes* that have so often been *full of Adultery* be admitted to see the *Lord* in Glory? And this Tongue be tun'd to praise him with sacred *Anthems* in *Heaven*, which has thus long lodg'd in it *a World of Iniquity*, and desecrated his Holy Name by prophane Oaths and Blasphemies on *Earth*? That these *Feet* that have been swift to attend the *Places* of Debauchery, and the *Assemblies of the Ungodly*, shall stand within the *Gates* of the *Heavenly Jerusalem*, and find a welcome place in the *General Assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven*? Or that these *Hands* that have so long been *executing* Acts of Unrighteousness *here*, shall be eternally *lifted up* with Praises, and *employ'd* in applauding the Name and Works of God *there*?

Luke 14. 14.
2 Pet. 2. 14.
Jam. 3. 6.
Psal. 1. 1.
Ps. 122. 2.
Heb. 12. 22, 23.

May not I more reasonably be *afraid*, that my Soul should fall *into the hands of the living God*, than chearfully *commit* it to him, now my Days are near expiring?

Heb. 10. 31.
1 Pet. 4. 19.

ing? And juſtly apprehend that the expence of my *Time* in Wickedneſs will be puniſhed with an *eternity* of Miſery? And that after I have ſo long *walk'd* in the ways of Sin, I muſt now at laſt *lie down* in the Grave in Sorrow? And O how pungent is that Sorrow, while my trembling Soul looks into the conſequences of ſuch a Death! For, if I die in my Sins, not only am I depriv'd of all this *Happineſs*, which I have been viewing at a diſtance, but muſt ſink into that *Abyſs* of *Miſery*, where a *never-dying Worm*, and an *unquenchable Lake of fire* are the juſt and dreadful Rewards of a ſinful Life. Iſa. 50. 11. Mark 9. 44. Rev. 20. 14, 15.

Theſe and ſuch like Jealouſies and Fears, carry ſo ſpecious an appearance of *Reaſon* with them, that without a more than common meaſure of *Faith*, they muſt needs give the Soul a great deal of Diſquiet. And 'tis no wonder if the Righteous and Holy God ſuffer the Mind often to labour under theſe troubleſome Thoughts, as a proper method both to *embitter* Sin to one that has been long accuſtomed to indulge it, and to teſtify for the incouragement of Holineſs, that he reſerves ſome *peculiar Rewards*

even in this Life, for them that have serv'd him with a *peculiar Zeal* and
Heb. 10. 22. Constancy; and that *full assurance of Faith* and Hope, and a clear prospect of
Heb. 6. 11. Heb. 11. 1. those *invisible* things *which he has laid up for those that love him*, is a Blessing wherewith he seldom crowns any but those who have been for some considerable part of their Lives, gradually raising
Col. 3. 2. *their Affections*, and fixing them *on things above*, habituating themselves to converse
1 Tim. 6. 12. in Heaven, and *fighting the good fight of Faith, that they might lay hold on eternal Life*. For since God is pleas'd to propose *Rewards* as motives to his Service, 'tis natural to conclude, That the consolating *Hope* of these Rewards (which is also a Reward it self) does ordinarily bear proportion to the *Time* and *Degree* of our Obedience: And therefore he that has *long* devoted himself to the Service of God, as he has commonly a *clearer* prospect of future Bliss, and of the security of his interest in it; so to advance his Joy still to a higher point, he has reason to expect a *distinguishing* Reward in the Celestial Glory; that if he has serv'd his Lord *much* in his Church, which is his *Kingdom on Earth*, he shall not

not be *the leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven*: For though he has no ground to hope to be rewarded *for* his Works on the account of *Debt*, becauſe when he has done his beſt *he is but an unprofitable Servant*; yet, ſince God himſelf has promiſed it, he may believe, that he ſhall be rewarded *according* to his Works, on the account of *Grace*. Thus as the early Convert looks back upon all the Sufferings he has endur'd for the ſake of his Divine Maſter with Comfort, *as on Waters that are paſt away*; ſo the Thoughts of theſe raiſe both his Deſire and Expectation earneſtly to look for a diſtinguiſhing Recompence of future Glory.

Mat. 5. 19. Luke 17. 10. Mat. 16. 27. Job 11. 16.

And how unexpreſſible is that Joy which a Holy Man feels, when the Eye of Faith can with a great degree of *ſtrength* penetrate, and with equal *ſteadineſs* contemplate the unſeen Glories of the Heavenly State, as firmly intereſſed therein! What Joy does the early Convert often taſte, eſpecially toward the Cloſe of his Days, when he approaches *the Mark* of his long Deſire and Hope; when he conſiders that as he has been long labouring to increaſe in the *Know-*

Philip. 3. 13, 14.

ledg of God, he shall suddenly *see him as he is*; and that as he has been long endeavouring after a *Conformity* to him, he shall not only see him, but *be like him* too: That as all the *Powers* of his Soul have been dedicated to his *Service*, so they shall be in a little time *intirely* fill'd with his *Glory*, and incessantly employ'd in his *Praise*; and as the *Members* of his Body have been *fellow-Servants* of Righteousness with the *Faculties* of his Soul, so their refin'd *Matter* and elegant *Form* at the Resurrection shall render them fit to become their *Partners* in Glory.

1 John 3. 2

Rom. 6. 13

1 Cor. 15. 42, 43, 44.

Thus have we made it evident, that the Time of our Youth is in many respects the *best* and *fittest* for the Great Work of remembering our Maker, and of engaging in his Service; and this, even upon the *Supposition* of our being sure of obtaining an opportunity of repenting in old Age, tho we should not reform before.

But we have further to shew, that as the Time of Youth is the *Best*; so it may be, and is most likely to be the *only* Season wherein it will be *possible* for

us

us to devote our ſelves to our Creator, or wherein our Service will be *acceptable* to him: Which gives us the cleareſt proof of all, of the *Danger* and *Folly* of neglecting to conſecrate to him the Morning of our Days. But the Conſideration of this we ſhall refer to another Diſcourſe.

THE

THE *Reaſonableneſs & Advantages* OF AN Early Converſion to God DEMONSTRATED.

SERMON III.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the Evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.

TO the *Diſadvantages* of delaying Converſion till the evil Days of *old Age*, and the *Advantages* of devoting one's ſelf to the Service of God in *Youth*, which we have already inſiſted

ed on, we have this *one* farther Consideration to add, *viz.* That

4. Our *Eternal Interest* is extremely *hazarded* by deferring Conversion to *old Age*, and best *secur'd* by an *early* change. For

(1.) We are always uncertain of *future* Time for the accomplishment of this *Important* Work. Our Time is at the Disposal of our *Maker*; and he has not entrusted our lavish hands with the *whole* stock of this precious Treasure, but only suffers it to run through them by *Moments*; so that we can recal no *past*, nor can we command any *future* Time, 'tis therefore our Business to improve the *present*; being ignorant how long the Divine Bounty will continue our Time in this World. Upon this account the wise Man instructs us well, not to *boast* our selves *of to Morrow*, seeing *we know not what a Day may bring forth*: And the Prophet *Isaiah* reprehends the folly of those that encourage one another to go on in sinful Excesses, by profanely promising themselves, that *to Morrow* should *be as the present Day, and much more abundant*. The Apostle *James* also shews the Vanity of such foolish Presumptions:

Prov. 27. 1

Isa. 56. 12.

Go

Go to now (ſays he) *ye that ſay, to day, or to morrow, we will go into ſuch a City, and continue there a Tear, and buy and ſell, and get Gain; whereas you know not what ſhall be on the morrow: for what is your Life? It is even a Vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away: For that ye ought to ſay, If the Lord will, we ſhall live, and do this or that.* James 4. 13, 14, 15.

And *Experience*, as well as *Scripture*, aſſures us, that *every Man walks in a vain ſhew*; and that *Man* (in this reſpect) *even at his beſt Eſtate is altogether Vanity:* That ſome *die in their full ſtrength, being wholly at eaſe and quiet; their Breaſts being full of Milk, and their Bones moiſten'd with Marrow:* As others *die in the bitterneſs of their Souls, and never eat with pleaſure:* That *they lie down alike in the Duſt, and the Worms cover 'em.* 'Tis evident to every one's obſervation that Youth does not exempt us from Death, nor enſure to us any farther portion of Time than what we at preſent enjoy. But on the contrary, that the far greater number of Mankind go early to the Grave; and for *one* that reaches to old Age a *multitude* fall ſhort of it. Pſal. 39. 6. V. 5. Job 21. 23, 24, 25.

Nor

Nor is it an uncommon thing for Persons of the most vigorous and hardy Constitution of Body to be suddenly snatch'd away into the other World by some violent Disease, or otherwise: For so many fatal *Strokes* are we obnoxious to; and so frail is the *Texture* of our *Earthly Tabernacle*, that some of the least and most contemptible things in the World are capable of giving it a mortal shock; and the very *Pores* of the Skin sometimes prove *Breaches* wide enough
Job 18.14. for *the King of Terrors* to enter in at.

This is well enough *known*, and often enough thought upon by the generality of Men, to engage them to use Precautions to secure themselves or their Posterity, as much as they can, from the prejudice their temporal Affairs might otherwise receive from sudden Death. And the Rate an *Estate for Life* is usually valued at, sufficiently shews, that to such purposes as these Men need not be
Psal. 39.4. *taught to know their End*, and the *measure* of their *Days* what it is, that they *may know how frail* they are.

And

And if there be no compariſon between Earth and Heaven, between the *uncertain* Wealth of this World, and the *durable* Riches of the other, between *this* Life and that which is *to come*: Then 'tis infinitely more imprudent for a Man to neglect *but* for a moment, to *make his Calling and Election ſure*, (whatever future Time here his Youth and Strength may ſeem to promiſe) than for him careleſly to ſuffer the ſecurity of his temporal Eſtate to depend merely on the uncertain Life of *another Man*, when he need not put it to that hazard; or to expoſe his Poſterity to Poverty and Miſery by omitting to make due proviſion for them againſt his *own* Mortality, when he has a fair opportunity of doing it. 2 Pet. i. 10.

'Tis Folly and Madneſs to leave that undone *to day*, which muſt be done at one time or other, or elſe we are ruin'd for ever, and which may (for ought we know) be impoſſible to be perform'd *to morrow*: To neglect to improve the *preſent* Time in doing that on which our *eternal* Bliſs depends; when the precious opportunity of doing it may the next moment by ſudden Death or ſome ſtupi-

stupifying Disease become irreparable.

Even the Impious *Atheist*, and the Profane *Epicure make* speedy *provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof*; from the consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of their Time in this World, and seek to gratify and indulge their Senses *to day*, because they are not sure of doing it *to morrow*. *Let us eat and drink* (say they) *for to morrow we shall die*: And they have so far reason on their side, in that they act in Conformity to their Principles, because their Hope is only in this Life, and they profess not to expect *another*. How unaccountably stupid then are they, who tho they believe there is a future State after this Life, and tho they *know that they shall die*, and *that* they know not how soon, yet in their vain Imaginations *put the evil Day of Death afar off*, and defer from time to time the great Work of *laying up Treasure in Heaven*, till the Season of doing it is irretrievably lost! And in vain is so precious a Talent as Time *put into the hands of such Fools, who have no heart to improve it*.

Rom. 13. 14.
Isa. 22. 13.
1 Cor. 15. 32.
Eccl. 9. 5.
Amos 6. 3.
Ezek. 12. 27.
Mat. 19. 21.
Prov. 17. 16.

If

If the wise Man argues rightly when he excites to diligence even in the ordinary Affairs of this Life, because of the speedy approach of Death: This Reason infinitely multiplies its force when apply'd to our present purpose, and may therefore most fitly be used to stir us up to an early and diligent improvement of the Time of Youth in the Service of God, *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do* (says he) *do it with thy Might; for there is no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledg, nor Wisdom in the Grave, whither Thou goest--For Man also knoweth not his Time: as the Fishes that are taken in an evil Net, and as the Birds that are caught in the Snare; so are the Sons of Men snared in an evil Time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.* 'Tis therefore our prudence and interest, to *work while 'tis day*, seeing we know not how soon *the night* may *come upon* us, *wherein no Man can work.* But further, Eccl. 9. 10. Ver. 12. John 9. 4.

(2.) If our Time were in our *own* hands, as it is in the hand of *God*, so that we could extend it many Years beyond the ordinary Course of Life; or if we had the certain *fore-knowledg* of the limits which the Almighty has fix'd to Psa. 31. 15. Job 7. 1.

Job 14.5. our Days, if we knew *the number of our Months*, and any of us could read our ſelves antient in the Book of the Divine Decrees, this could by no means juſtify or excuſe our Negligence, if we ſhould thereupon preſume to delay our Converſion till towards the Cloſe of our Time, becauſe of the uncertainty of the continuance of the Day of God's *Patience* and *Grace*. For as the Days of our *Lives* are uncertain, ſo is the Day of *Grace* too; and as *thoſe* are very ſhort, ſo *this* may be much ſhorter, and we Luk. 19.44 Ver. 42. may ſoon out-live *the Time of our Viſitation* from Heaven, and ſo *the things that belong to* our *Peace* may be finally *hidden from our Eyes*.

'Tis infinite Mercy in the Great and Holy God to give a wretched Sinner *one* Smile, one *ſingle* offer of Reconciliation; and 'tis great Ingratitude and Folly in a guilty Creature but *once* to refuſe to hearken to ſo Gracious a Call. But what words can expreſs the Goodneſs and Condeſcenſion of the Almighty to a miſerable Worm, when he importunately *repeats* the Terms of Peace to *in-*
2 Cor. 5. 20. *vite*, nay to *beſeech* him *to be reconciled to him!* And how provoking muſt the guilt

guilt of that Sinner be, who, after all this kindneſs of God towards him, ſtops his Ears at his Counſel, like *the deaf Adder that will not hearken to the Voice of Charmers, charming never ſo wiſely!* And therefore 'tis not to be wonder'd at, if his abuſed Patience and Mercy be turn'd into Indignation and Wrath: And thus it often comes to paſs, *Becauſe* Men *receive not the love of the Truth, that they might be ſaved; God ſends them ſtrong Deluſion, that they ſhould believe a Lie, and that they all may be damned, who believe not the Truth, but have pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs.* And *the Word* of God inſtead of being *the ſavour of Life unto Life*, becomes *the ſavour of Death unto Death* to them. Thus the Righteous God *ſets his Face againſt* them that *ſtiffen their Necks againſt* him, and *hardens their Hearts* in Judgment, who *themſelves* have *harden'd them* againſt the offers of Mercy. If the declining Church of *Epheſus* was threaten'd with the removal of her *Candleſtick*, in caſe ſhe refus'd to hearken to the Voice of our Saviour, when he call'd her to Repentance; how juſtly may every impenitent Sinner fear the ſpeedy ending of the

Pſal. 58. 4, 5.

2 Theſ. 2. 10, 11, 12.

2 Cor. 2. 16.

Jer. 44. 10, 11.

2 Chron. 30. 8.

Neh. 9. 16.

Rom. 9. 18

Exo. 8. 15.

Acts 19. 9.

Rev. 2. 4, 5.

Day of *Grace* to him? And if at one Sermon of the Apostle *Paul*'s, as some of the *Jews*, his Auditors, were converted, so others of them were judicially sealed up in *hardness of heart*, and *blindness of mind*, (the most dreadful punishment on this side Hell) and the Gospel, which they had rejected and despis'd, was suddenly snatch'd from them to be carried to the ignorant *Heathen*: Is it not still to be fear'd, that they that defer to yield themselves *to the obedience of Faith*, when the glad Tidings of Salvation have been again and again publish'd to them, may utterly *fall short* of Happiness by this their Obstinacy and *Unbelief*? And if *profane Esau*, *who for one morsel of Meat sold his Birth-right*, *was afterwards rejected*, *when he would have inherited the Blessing*, *and found no place of Repentance*, *tho he sought it carefully with Tears*; How justly may God reject them, who have often *resisted the Spirit of Grace*? And suffer them *to mourn at last* without pity in their greatest Distress, who have often *griev'd* the *Holy Spirit* in gratifying their sinful Inclinations? And seeing he has said his *Spirit shall not always strive with Men*, who knows

Acts 28. 23—28.
Rom. 1. 5.
Heb. 3. 19.
Heb. 12. 16, 17.
Acts 7. 51.
Prov. 5. 11
Eph. 4. 30.
Gen. 6. 3.

knows how ſoon he may *ſhut up his tender Mercies in Diſpleaſure*, againſt thoſe that have long rebell'd againſt him; and *ſwear in his Wrath, that they* ſhall *never enter into his Reſt?* How ſoon he may accompliſh that terrible Threatening he has pronounc'd againſt the Impenitent, *He that hardens his Neck, being often reprov'd, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroy'd, and that without Remedy?* Pſal. 77. 9. Pſ. 95. 11. Heb. 3. 18. Prov. 29. 1.

(3.) There is not only a poſſibility or a *bare* likelihood of the *expiration* of the Day of Grace, to thoſe that ſpend the beſt of their Time in Rebellion againſt their Maker, before they arrive at old Age: But on the contrary, there is only a poſſibility, and *no* likelihood, that the *Holy Spirit* ſhould *continue* to ſtrive with them at the winding up of their Days, who through the greateſt part of their Time have reſiſted his Counſels and Motions. And 'tis not only *Reaſon* that furniſhes us with proofs of this from the Soveraignty and Juſtice of God conſider'd with the great *Aggravations* of Impenitency under the means of Grace, or the *Threatnings* in the Holy *Scripture* that plainly include this danger, (as appears from the laſt Head inſiſted on) but

Experience joins issue in this matter, and evinces that what our Saviour says of *Rich Men*, may with as much reason and force be applied to *old Sinners*, namely,

Mat. 19. 24 That *'tis easier for a Camel to pass through the eye of a Needle, than* for such *to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* And if this Saying seem severe to any, in respect of these *lusts*, as it did to the Disciples of

Ver. 25. Christ, in regard of the *other*, it cannot justly be soften'd with any farther addition than that which our Saviour subjoin'd to qualify his words in the first

Ver. 26. case, *viz.* That *nothing is impossible with God.* 'Tis a thing possible, because all things are so to God, but very unlikely, and not to be often expected; and when at any time it comes to pass, God may be said to make a step out of the ordinary *method* of the Dispensation of his *Grace*, somewhat like that he makes, when he works a Miracle in the *Sphere* of *Nature.* In this matter (I say) one may safely appeal to Experience. Let any one that is acquainted with a considerable number of *pious* and *aged* Persons, ask each of them from what time he dates his Conversion; and for one that has had that happy Change wrought

wrought on his Soul, ſince he became *Old*, he ſhall find many that turn'd to God in the ſtrength and verdure of their *Youth*.

And can there be a greater inſtance given then of the *deceitfulneſs of Sin*, and of the bewitching power it has over the common Senſe and Reaſon of Mankind, than we have in the vain promiſes of Repentance in old Age, wherewith ſo many flatter *themſelves*, and by which they ſeem to hope to render *God* propitious to them? Is any kind of Folly ſo great in its *Degree*, or ſo dangerous in its *Conſequences* as this? For Mortals to lull themſelves aſleep in Sin, and ſing a ſtupifying *Requiem* to their Souls, while they hang on the brink of eternal Perdition, when their vain Hope has merely this uncertain foundation, That there is a *bare poſſibility*, that their *old Age may be* accepted of God, tho they ſpend their *Youth* in ſinning againſt him? What an unparallel'd preſumption! For a Man to neglect to make proviſion for his everlaſting Bliſs at *preſent*, only becauſe 'tis not abſolutely impoſſible that he may do it in time *to come*: To refuſe the preſent improvement of the Time of Grace God Heb. 3. 13.

is *now* pleas'd to allow him, because the Divine Goodness can afford him the like advantage *hereafter*; tho 'tis very improbable that he will grant it to so presumptuous a Criminal! Will any Man fall without fear upon the *point* of his Sword, because 'tis possible he may not receive a *mortal Wound* by it? Is any Man so mad as to poison himself with the most subtile *Venom*, because he thinks there is some possibility of his obtaining an *Antidote*? Or will any one in his Wits carelessly suffer his Body to languish under a violent *Disease*, without seeking for Cure, till his strength is almost quite exhausted, and he's ready to expire, thinking himself secure enough of Recovery, because 'tis not utterly impossible, that a Man may be restor'd to *Health* when almost reduc'd to the last Gasp by violent *Sickness*? No, Men are more careful of their *Bodies* than to hazard 'em at this rate, how careless soever they are of their *Souls*: They are prudent in the *Affairs of this Life*, but act after the most absurd and improvident manner, about the great Concerns of *the World to come*.

But

But whether we will act reaſonably or no, what has been argu'd does abundantly demonſtrate that it is both highly *reaſonable* and *advantageous* for young Perſons to devote themſelves to the Service of their *Creator in the Days of their Youth*; and that 'tis as *dangerous* as 'tis *unreaſonable* to defer that important Work to the Days of *old Age*, which are very *uncertain*, in that we know not whether we ſhall attain them or not; and, if we do, will prove ſo *evil*, if this great Buſineſs of our Lives be till then neglected, that we ſhall have occaſion to complain that we *have no pleaſure in them.*

I ſhall now endeavour to improve the things I have inſiſted on, by way of Application.

And ſhall addreſs my ſelf;

1. To thoſe that are *advanc'd* in Years.

2. To thoſe who have not yet exceeded the Days of *Youth.*

Firſt, As for you that are *advanc'd* in Years;

What

What has been said must needs offer you an occasion to enquire of your own Consciences, Whether you have dedicated your selves to the Service of God, or not? Whether you have yet *remember'd your Creator* in the sense of our Text, and are truly converted to him.

If you have *not* so remember'd him, consider,

(1.) How extremely dangerous your Case is. Can you be secure on the very brink of Destruction? Surely 'tis more than *high time* for you *to awake, lest you sleep the sleep of Death.* It will be a Miracle of Grace, if ever you be *recover'd out of the Snare of the Devil, who have been* so long *led Captive by him at his Will.* It has been your great folly to defer to *lay up in store for your selves a good foundation against the Time to come*, till now; but your *folly* in deferring it longer will still increase together with your *guilt* and *danger*; of which if you are sensible, seek immediately to escape: *Fly from the Wrath to come*, which is hastening toward you; for tho you may carelessly slumber, *your Damnation slumbers not*, but will soon overtake you, if you

Rom. 13. 11.
Psal. 13. 3.
2 Tim. 2. 26.
1 Tim. 6. 19.
Mat. 3. 7.
2 Pet. 2, 3.

you don't ſpeedily *awake to righteouſneſs,* and to the ſerious remembrance of your Creator; for *the Wicked ſhall be turned into Hell, and all the Nations that FORGET God.* If any of you have vainly flatter'd your ſelves all your Days with the preſumptuous thoughts of having ſtill time enough before you for the great Work of your Converſion: Let me warn and exhort every ſuch perſon in the words of the Apoſtle *Peter* to *Simon Magus*; *Repent of this thy Wickedneſs, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine Heart may be forgiven thee; For I perceive that thou art in the gall of Bitterneſs, and in the bond of Iniquity.* And *to Day, while 'tis call'd to Day,* remember your Maker, *leſt any of you be* further *harden'd through the deceitfulneſs of Sin.*

1 Cor. 15. 34. Pſal. 9. 17. Acts 8. 22, 23. Heb. 3. 13.

(2.) If you are convinc'd of the folly and ſinfulneſs of your *Neglect*; Do not abſolutely conclude, 'tis now too late to obtain Mercy, nor continue that neglect by *Deſpair*, which you have long perſiſted in by *Preſumption.* As you cannot ſet limits to the *Juſtice* of God, ſo neither can you meaſure his *Long-ſuffering* and *Goodneſs*: Therefore you ought not

Psal. 77. 7, 8, 9. not now to say, *His Mercies are quite gone for ever, and he will be favourable no more.* Encourage your selves to turn to God, and to rely on his Mercy, at least with the same Argument the famish'd *Lepers* us'd to engage one another to throw themselves on the Compassion of

2 Kings 7. 3, 4. the *Syrian* Army. *Why sit we here* (say they) *until we Die? If we say we will enter into the City, then the Famine is in the City, and we shall Die there: And if we sit still here, we Die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the Host of the Syrians; if they save us alive, we shall Live, and if they kill us, we shall but Die.* Reason with your selves after the like manner. Why sit we still in a state of the greatest danger? If after the sense of our danger, we return to our former Course of Life, we must perish; if we remain in our present posture, and neglect to try the *Father of Mercies*, whether he will commiserate such inveterate Sinners, we inevitably perish too. Let us cast our selves at his Feet; if he'll save us, we shall live eternally; if he refuse, we can but perish. Say as *David* did

2 Sam. 16. 12. (in another case,) *It may be the LORD will look on our Affliction.* Venture to pro-

prostrate your selves at the Throne of Grace, as Queen *Esther* did at the Feet of the *Persian* Monarch, with an *(If I perish, I perish)*: And who knows, but the Scepter of Divine Mercy may yet tender you a Pardon? 'Tis possible that the Prodigal may be accepted, tho he return late to his Father's House; and that God may place you among the rare Instances of his free and soveraign Grace. And if you are deeply sensible of your past Iniquity, and earnestly groan for a Change in your Souls, for a *New* and Pure *Heart* and *a right Spirit*; 'tis to be hop'd, that God, whose Compassions are infinite, has now at last open'd your Eyes, that you might not *sleep the sleep of* eternal *Death*; has made you *hunger and thirst after Righteousness*, with a design to satisfy you, and has wounded your Spirits by a *Godly Sorrow*, with a purpose to heal them with *the Oil of Joy*, with the *Comforts of his Free Spirit*. You have run a strange Venture to delay a Work of this nature, and of this consequence till now; but if God has given you deep and serious Repentance, he designs you favour; and your Contrition gives hope of a Pardon.

Esth. 4. 16.
Luk. 15. 20.
Ps. 51. 10.
Psal. 13. 3.
Mat. 5. 6.
2 Cor. 7. 10.
Isa. 61. 3.
Ps. 51. 12.

Isa. 55.7. don. *Let the wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the* LORD, *and he will have Mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* But

2. If you are truly converted, 'tis Prov. 15. 31. your Happiness and Honour. *The hoary Head is a Crown of Glory, if it be found in the way of Righteousness.*

But did you consecrate to your Creator the Flower of your Youth? Or have you only offer'd him your later Years?

Mat. 20. 5, 6. It may be, you began to *work in his Vineyard* but *at the Tenth* or *Eleventh Hour*, or at least since your Sun has been declining. If so, then

(1.) Admire and adore that Grace of God, which kept back your feet from Destruction, when you were ready to step into eternal Misery, and indulgently pluck'd you out of the way of approaching Ruine, as the blessed Angels Gen. 19. 16, 17. did *Lot*, to secure him from the impending Shower of Fire and Brimstone, which threaten'd *Sodom*, when *he linger'd* in that vicious and accursed City. How can you choose but reflect with astonishment on the Danger you have escap'd,

eſcap'd, and bleſs that Divine Hand that kindly diverted you from that preſumptuous Courſe, that was ready to caſt you on a Rock, on which you have ſeen ſo many daſh themſelves in pieces. Praiſe him (I ſay) *who has ſav'd you from ſo great*, and ſo near *a Death*; and *remember'd* you in Mercy, when you had *forgotten him Days without number.* 2 Cor. 1. 10. Jer. 2. 32.

(2.) Let the ſincerity of your *Thankfulneſs*, and of your *Repentance* too appear, by the improvement of that little portion of Time which you have yet remaining. *Redeem your Time*, now at leaſt, *becauſe the Days are evil.* Improve the *evil* Days of old Age with the utmoſt Diligence, ſince the *better* Days of Youth are paſt recalling. Evidence both to your ſelves and to others, that your *late* Repentance is true, by ſuch an induſtrious management of your remaining Days, as may convince the World, that 'tis no ſmall grief of Heart to you, that your Repentance was ſo *late*. Recover your loſt Time as much as poſſible by your preſent diligence, and let none of your precious Moments for the future be heedleſly expended, but husband 'em well in *working out your Salvation with fear* Eph. 5. 16. Philip. 2. 12.

fear and trembling. Let your frequent hours, and acts of Devotion, make up the long want your selves have had of those sacred Privileges that attend the Exercises of Holy Worship, and thereby make restitution (as much as in you lies) to your Creator, for the Sacrilege you have often committed, in robbing him of those pious Offerings, those continual Sacrifices with which you should daily have furnished his Altar. Let your Example be as beneficial to Mankind, as it has been injurious: And as you have tempted others to *Sin*, strive now to incite them to *Piety*. If you bear the Character of Parents or Masters, labour to convince those young Persons, who are under the influence of your *Counsel*, or the awe of your *Authority*, of the great Advantages of an early Conversion: And let them know you now seriously lament the past Follies of your Youth: That as your ill Counsels, and vicious Patterns have long made you *Partakers of other Mens Sins*; so your Religious Exhortations and good Examples, may obtain on your Acquaintance, and those that are under your Conduct, so as to intitle you (in some sort)

1 Tim. 5. 22.

ſort) to *other Mens Vertues.* In a word, remember that you are under a ſpecial Obligation, *that* (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks) *you ſhould no longer live the reſt of your Time in the Fleſh to the Luſts of Men, but to the Will of God. For the Time paſt of your Life may ſuffice to have wrought the Will of the Gentiles, when ye walked in Laſciviouſneſs, Luſts, exceſs of Wine, Revellings, Banquetings, and abominable Idolatries.* 1 Pet. 4. 2, 3.

If your Caſe be otherwiſe, and you began *early* to give your ſelves up to the Service of your Creator:

(1.) Bleſs and magnify that God who was *the Guide of your Youth*; who wrought that happy Change on your Souls, who were *Children of Wrath by Nature as well as others.* What copious Subjects of Praiſe will your Experience furniſh you withal, when you reflect on the long *Series* of Divine Favours, that have attended you through the various Parts and Changes of Life! And what a pleaſant Review may you take of a well-ſpent Life, directed to the *Glory* of God, and conducted by his *Grace!* What matter of thankſgiving may you find in the many Aſſurances of his Love, and in the Evidences of the Work of his Grace Jer. 3. 4. Eph. 2. 3.

upon your Souls; and in the frequent and familiar prospect he has given your Faith of that invisible and ineffable Glory you have been so long aspiring after, and are now so near enjoying! You have reason to bless your Creator, as well for *preventing* your commission of the many Sins you have escap'd, as for *forgiving* of those you have committed: For preserving your *Innocence* on many occasions, as well as for pardoning your *Guilt* on others; for making you happy so soon by an early Conversion, and for giving you the hope of a distinguishing Crown of Glory; for honouring the *best* of your Time by accepting it in his Service; and for sweetning the *worst* of it (the *evil* Days of old Age) with all the Comforts which the *Reflection* on a Life of Grace, and all the Joys which the *prospect* of a Life of Glory can
Ps. 149. 6. inspire. Surely *the high Praises of God* should be *in your Mouths*; for (to use the Words of Christ on that solemn occasion when his Disciples cry'd *Hosanna*
Luk. 19. 40 to him) *I tell you, if you should hold your Peace, the Stones would immediately cry out.*

(2.) You

(2.) You ought to manifeſt the truth of your early Converſion by the *extent* of your Knowledg in Divine Things, and by the *warmth* of your Affection to them. *I write unto you, Fathers,* (ſays the Apoſtle *John*) *becauſe you have known him that is from the beginning.* Both God and Men expect that your growth both in Knowledg and in Grace, ſhould bear ſome proportion to the Time you have ſpent in the School of Chriſt; that you ſhould be the talleſt Cedars in *Lebanon*, that have been ſo long planted there; and the moſt fruitful Vines, that have been ſo often *water'd with the River of God.* Seeing you are not *Babes*, either in regard of the time you have liv'd in the *World*, or of that you have ſpent in the *Church* of God; but Perſons *of full Age, who by reaſon of uſe* ought to *have your Senſes exercis'd to diſcern both good and evil*: Let it not be ſaid of you, that *when for the Time you ought to be Teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God*, and that you are again become ſuch as *have need of Milk and not of ſtrong Meat*: Or that you are of the number of thoſe,

1 John 2. 13, 14.

Pſal. 45. 9.

Heb. 5. 13, 14.

Ver. 12.

2 Tim. 3. 7. who are *ever learning, and never able to come to the Knowledg of the Truth.* You should be greatly mortified to *this* World, who have a long time profess'd to be convinc'd of its Vanity, and to be 1 Cor. 15. 31. *dying daily to it*; and who find old Age ready to transport you to the *other*. And since you have long pretended to have πολίτευμα. Phil. 3. 20. had your *Conversation* and business in Heaven, certainly you ought to have gain'd much by that happy *Commerce*; and to have laid up much Treasure in the Regions of Glory, as well as to 1 Tim. 6. 18. have been *rich in good Works* here below: and you should be dextrous in Eph. 6. 11.—18. putting on and handling the *Christian Armour*, who have often had occasion to try it: And so skilful in defeating the Projects of your *Adversary* the Devil, 2 Cor. 2. 11. (since you are suppos'd *not* to be *ignorant of his Devices*) as after the sharpest Rom. 8 37. Conflicts to become *more than Conquerors through him that hath loved* you.

These things may reasonably be suppos'd and expected of you. But do you fill up these Characters that so well agree with your long standing in the Church of God? Are you Fathers in *Knowledg* and *Piety* as well as in *Years*? And is the

the ſize of your *Spiritual* Stature proportionate to the time of your *Natural* Life, or at leaſt of your *Spiritual* Life, which commenc'd not long after the other? Are you become very humble by a long acquaintance with your own Hearts, and with that God who is *the ſearcher* of them? Is your Faith become ſtrong by a long exerciſe? Your Hope firm by your long and familiar acquaintance with the Promiſes of God, and with him *in whom all thoſe Promiſes are* Yea *and* Amen [True and Faithful]? Have your various Afflictions taught you to *poſſeſs your Souls in Patience?* And have the many Favours you have received of God ſo tun'd your Hearts to his Praiſe, that you can *in every thing give thanks?* Does your ſpiritual Vigour advance, as your natural Strength declines? And is your *inward Man renew'd day by day, as your outward Man periſhes?* Have you made ſuch a Proficiency as this in Religion? Or is it otherwiſe? Examine your ſelves ſtrictly and ſeriouſly about it. May not your Creator ſend you back to learn of thoſe that are much younger, and who have had leſs Advantages of Improvement than you?

Jer. 17. 10. 2 Cor. 1. 20. Luke 21. 19. 1 Theſſ. 5. 18. 2 Cor. 4. 16.

Nay may he not send you back to be instructed by your selves, I mean, by the former part of your Lives? And shame your *late* Back-slidings, by putting you in mind of your *early* Zeal? May he not justly reprove you in reminding you of *your* former Kindnesses to him (as well as of *his* to you) as he did the *Jews* of old; and say, *I remember thee, the kindness of thy Youth, and the love of thy Espousals, when thou wentest after me in the Wilderness, in a Land that was not sown:* Israel *was Holiness to the LORD, and the first-fruits of his Increase?* May he not charge you as he did the *Ephesians*, with having *left your first Love?* And with having fallen short of *your first Works?*

Jer. 2.2,3.

Rev. 2.4,5.

Surely it becomes you now strenuously to persist in *fighting the good Fight of Faith*, when you are near the consummation of all your Victories in an eternal Triumph: To *press forward* vigorously in your spiritual Race now at last, when you have almost attain'd *the Mark*; and to aspire earnestly after that Diadem of Glory, with which you are so suddenly to be crown'd: To converse constantly in *Heaven*, now you are just

1 Tim. 6. 12.

Philip. 3. 13, 14.

just forsaking the *Earth*; to *live* entirely by Faith, since you are going to *die* in it; to *die in the Lord*, and that in order to *live with him* in a State that will turn your Faith into Vision, and your Hope into Enjoyment. Heb. 11. 13. Rev. 14. 13. 1 Cor. 13. 12.

If thus while Age *bends* you toward the Earth, Grace *raises* your Hearts toward Heaven; if your Faith grows *sagacious*, while your Eyes grow *dim*; and your Hope grows *firm*, while your Hands and Knees are *feeble*; if the Warmth of your Love to God *increases* as your natural Heat *abates*; and the Sallies of your Souls after him grow *strong* and lively, as the Motions of your animal Spirits grow *weak* and languid: Then, as your *last Works* will be *more than your first*, so you'll honour God as well in the *worst* part of your Time, as you have done in the *best* of it. And as by *bringing forth much fruit* even *in old Age*, you will *glorify your Heavenly Father*: So your Hoary Hairs will be honourable in this World, and an *exceeding and eternal weight of Glory* will be your Portion in the World *to come*. Rev. 2. 5. — *Primis sic major Gratia Pomis; Hybernæ pretium sic meruêre Rosæ.* Psal. 92. 14. Joh. 15. 8. 2 Cor. 4. 17.

Secondly, Let me now address my self to you that are *Young*; and entreat you also to put this important *Question* to your own Hearts, Whether you have yet remember'd your Creator, so as to dedicate your selves to his Service, or not?

If you have devoted to him the first-fruits of your Time:

1. It behoves you with profound *Humility* and Reverence to ascribe to God the Glory of his Grace, who made you
Ps. 110. 3. *willing in the Day of his Power to serve him in the Beauties of Holiness*, even *from the Womb of the Morning* of your Time, and to offer him the early *Dew of your Youth*:
1 Cor. 1. 29. For *no Flesh may glory in his Presence*; see-
Isa. 40. 6. 1 Pet. 1. 24. ing *all Flesh is Grass, and the goodliness thereof as the* fading *Flower of the Field*, in a *Moral* as well as a *Natural* sense. If you have been distinguish'd from others by early impressions of Piety; know,
1 Cor. 4. 7. that 'tis Grace *that hath made the diffe-*
Psal. 8. 2. Mat. 21. 16. *rence*, and glorify that God, who *perfects his praise out of the Mouths of Babes*
Luke 10. 21. *and Sucklings*; and *reveals that to Children*, which he sometimes *hides from the Wise and Prudent*. Bless him that has

redeem'd

redeem'd you from the Earth, and from among Men, at a time when the Pleaſures of Sin, and the Society of Sinners appear in the moſt alluring form. Praiſe that God, who by the early Seeds of Holineſs he has ſown in your Hearts, is preparing you to reap a plentiful Harveſt of Graces and Bleſſings here, and of Glorious Rewards hereafter. Rev. 14. 3, 4.

2. Conſider the mighty Obligations that are upon you to engage you in a Holy Converſation. As you have *receiv'd* more than many others, more is *requir'd* of you: And what we have ſaid may be juſtly expected to be found in thoſe old Diſciples that have follow'd Chriſt from their Youth, ſufficiently ſignifies the Mark you are to aim at; and the exalted degrees of Grace you are to aſpire to. In order to which you ought to be cautious of the leaſt degree of Apoſtacy. Have a care, leſt after having ſeem'd to *begin in the Spirit*, *you* ſhould miſerably *end in the Fleſh*. Therefore *flee youthful Luſts*. And *endure hardſhip as good Soldiers of Jeſus Chriſt*: Inure your ſelves to Self-denial; and *ſet your Affections on things above*. *Watch and pray*, Gal. 3. 3. 2 Tim. 2. 22. Ver. 3. Col. 3. 1, 2. Mat. 26. 41

pray, that you may not enter into Temptation, or at least that your *Faith* may *not fail you,* when you are tempted: And to that end read and *meditate on the Word of God Day and Night,* that you may know how to manage that *Sword of the Spirit,* so as to wound the Head of your potent and subtle Adversary. *I write unto you young Men* (saith the Apostle *John*) *because you are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.* Govern your selves in every thing by the exact Rule of the Holy Scripture; For *wherewith shall a young Man cleanse his way, but by taking heed thereto according to* that Divine *Word?* Take heed lest the Holy Religion you profess be dishonour'd by your Practices: Let your manner of Life be so circumspect and unreproachable, that it may stop the Mouths of Blasphemers; *stop* them did I say? Nay that it may *open* them in favour of Religion, that *when they see your good Works they may* be induc'd to *glorify your Heavenly Father,* and to worship him, and to confess that *God is in you of a Truth.* Let a becoming Modesty and Gravity adorn your Conversation: *Let*

Luk. 22. 32
Psal. 1. 2.
Eph. 6. 17.
1 John 2. 13, 14.
Ps. 119. 9.
Mat. 5. 16.
1 Cor. 14. 25.

your

your Speech be always with Grace, ſeaſon'd with Salt: Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouths, but that which is good to the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter Grace to the Hearers. Provoke others to a Holy Emulation by the luſtre of your Examples, and chooſe the excellent Patterns of the moſt devout and experienc'd Chriſtians for your own Imitation. Let your Zeal be conſtantly directed by Knowledg, and your Knowledg always ballaſted by Humility. In a word, *Set the Lord always before your Faces*, that you may not ſin againſt him. Remember your Creator, what he is, and what Homage and Service you owe him: Remember how *reaſonable* that Service is, and how entirely your true Intereſt and Happineſs is involv'd in it, and induſtriouſly improve all the Advantages of your *Time* to the Glory of him, who is *the God of your Life*; that if you live to be aged, you may be able to make happy Reflections on your Youth; and on the endearing Favours of him that has been with you from your Youth to old Age, and *has carried* you (as the Prophet ſpeaks) even *to hoary Hairs*: That *coming to the Grave in a full Age*, you

Col. 4.6. Eph. 4.29. Pſal. 16.8. Rom. 12.1. Pſal. 42.8. Iſa. 45.4.

Job 5.26. you may be *like ſhocks of Corn that come in in their ſeaſon*, fully ripen'd and prepar'd for Heaven: Or if you are called to lie down in the Grave before, that you may be ripe for Glory, and *made meet to* Col. 1.12. *be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in light* betimes; that your Names may be great on Earth, and your *Rewards* may be *great in Heaven.*

As for you that are ſtill Young, but have not *yet* made an offering of your Youth to your Creator:

(1.) Let me ask you, What hinders you from preſenting ſo reaſonable a Service to him? You have ſeen that the reaſon of this Duty, which our Text urges, is founded in your very Being, in the *Relation* you bear to the Almighty as his Creatures; and ſince your greateſt Intereſt too is embarked in it, Why ſhould ſo juſt, and ſo uſeful an Exhortation be rejected? Will you yet continue to rob your *Maker* of the Homage and Service you owe him? And deprive *your ſelves* of the Honour and Privilege of ſerving him? Will you yet be *un-*Deut. 32. 18. *mindful of the Rock that begat you*, and ſtill *forget the God that form'd you?* Is the great God ready to accept your Ser-

vice,

vice, and will you ſtill refuſe to offer it? What Illuſions of Senſe are thoſe that charm you? What *Bonds of Iniquity* are thoſe that captivate your Souls, and hold you, both againſt the forcible *Arguments*, and the indulgent *Invitations* of the Divine Word? Act. 8. 23.

As we have taken a view of the *Arguments* that oblige you to your Duty; let us alſo, to remove the chief *Stumbling-blocks* that obſtruct your way, enquire a little into the pretended *Reaſons* that detain you in your Sin.

Will you ſay, "'Tis a rigorous Demand to require us to forſake the "World almoſt as ſoon as we come in- "to it; and to renounce the charming "Sweets wherewith it flatters our Sen- "ſes, even before we have ſo much as "taſted many of the Pleaſures to which "it invites us: And this in that part of "our Life, that gives us the higheſt re- "liſh of theſe Delights, when our Sen- "ſes are moſt lively and active, and "when the World ſhews it ſelf moſt "obliging and kind, and preſents us on "every ſide with thouſands of pleaſant "Objects?

But

But tell me, Are the Promises of the *World* like the Promises of *God?* Are those Pleasures, the highest relish of which vanishes (by your own confession) together with your Youth, and so may be soon out-liv'd by your selves, to be compar'd with the eternal Joys of Heaven? Are the Smiles of the *World*, and the Pleasures of *Sense* to be preferr'd to the Smiles of *God*, and the Joy of a *good Conscience* here, and to the refin'd and spiritual *Delights* of the other World? Is a Life of Sin, which will prove *bitterness in the latter end of it*, which is enjoy'd but a few Moments, but follow'd with the gnawings of a *Worm that never dies*, to be chosen before a Life of Holiness, which is accompanied with inward Peace in the Soul, and follow'd with *Immortal Glory* and Pleasure? Is it worth the while to purchase a few hours delight in gratifying your sordid and brutish Appetites, with the loss of your precious Souls? Will you rather hazard an eternal privation of the Joys of Heaven, and expose your selves to the danger of everlasting Perdition, than curb the extravagant Inclinations of your vain and sensual Hearts? Will you still

2 Sam. 2. 26.

Mar. 9. 44.

ſtill flatter the levity and unſteadineſs of your youthful Minds, in purſuing all the vain *Fantoms* your extravagant Imaginations can repreſent? Will you continue to follow thoſe gay Bubbles, which will yield you ſcarce any thing but *Diſappointment*, *Vexation* and *Guilt*; when you are invited to fix your Minds and your Hearts on your Creator, to make him the *Object* of your Thoughts and of your Deſires, who gives his *Votaries* the Hope of Immortal Glory, which produces in their Souls a great degree of Happineſs at *preſent*, and who will *hereafter* fill them with Joys infinitely beyond the moſt raiſed Expectation?

Will you further urge, "But we "have no mind to be ſingular, to di"ſtinguiſh our ſelves from the generali"ty of Mankind by an Affectation of "a ſtrict Courſe of Life; and that at "an Age, when every one allows the "Senſes an Indulgence. There is a "proper ſeaſon for every thing. Youth "is the Time for *Pleaſure*, and Old "Age for *Repentance*; for the latter "part of our Lives ſeems deſtin'd to "trouble and ſorrow: And then 'tis fit

"to

" to live a spiritual Life, when Age has " deaden'd the Senses, and so prepar'd " us to live after that abstracted man- " ner.

And is it not as easy as 'tis reasonable to reply, That 'tis a foolish Scrupulosity to be so careful to avoid *Singularity* as to run from it into a *Common* Destruction: To refuse to be holy and happy, and to choose Sin and Misery, because *the way to Life is narrow* and unfrequented, and the way to *Damnation broad* and full of Company? Is not this a vain affectation of Conformity to the World, for you to *follow a Multitude to do evil*, tho *their Ways lead to Hell, and go down to the Chambers of Death*; to abandon your selves to the Torrent of evil Examples, tho they *drown you in Perdition*; to sacrifice your own eternal Interest in complaisance to the Custom and Humour of other Men, and to *walk in the Counsel of the Ungodly*, tho you damn your selves for Company?

Mat. 7. 13, 14.

Exod. 23. 2. Prov. 7. 27.

1 Tim. 6. 9.

Psal. 1. 1. and V. 6.

And because some rather seem to pity, (or even indulge) than blame many of the Follies of Youth, partly from the Consideration of their *Unexperience* and giddiness of Mind, and of their great Pro-

Propenſity to carnal Pleaſures; partly becauſe *Cuſtom* has render'd the Vices of Youth familiar to the World, and partly becauſe many of thoſe that are advanc'd in Years, inſtead of reflecting on their youthful Vanities with Sorrow, are yet ſo inſenſible, as to look back upon them as *excuſable* Follies, or as Sins of ſmall conſequence; muſt therefore an Opinion that has ſo rotten a foundation, obtain Credit in the World, as if it were a *Maxim* of undoubted Truth? Does the Holy Scripture, or Reaſon allow Youth any ſuch Diſpenſation for Sin? Is ſo great an Evil to be at any time indulg'd? Is any ſcope in Vice allowable to the Time of *Youth* any more than to the Time of *Old Age?* Is not Sin always evil, and always to be avoided? Can you think it deſerves the very *beſt* of your Time, and that your Creator is unworthy of ſuch an Offering?

You have heard it ſufficiently prov'd that Youth is the moſt proper Time of all, and Old Age the moſt unfit for the great Buſineſs of Converſion to God; that 'tis the greateſt proof of the Reality of our Self-denial, when we reſtrain the vicious Inclinations of our Youth,

that are so eager after sensual Pleasures: And that an aged Sinner is so far from being likely to be a true Penitent, that the long Time he has been hardening himself in his Wickedness, renders the Change of his Heart impossible, without a more than ordinary effort of Grace, which God is seldom pleas'd to grant to them that are grown old in Wickedness.

Will you say after this, "God whose "Mercies are infinite, is Gracious e- "nough to receive us into his Vineyard "at the last hour of the Day; and to "give us a place in *Paradise*; if, like the "Thief on the Cross, we begin to re- "pent, when we are ceasing to live; "and we may hope to die happily, tho "we have liv'd viciously?

After having so largely detected the Vanity of such Hopes as these, as we have already done, we need not add much more. Is not this to build an imaginary Happiness on a thousand Uncertainties? And what a daring presumption is it, to *continue in Sin, that Grace may abound?* Rom. 6. 1. Because the Gracious God has given *one* Example in his Word, of a Sinner converted at the last hour of his Life,

Life, is it reaſonable for *every* Sinner to conclude, That he may expect the ſame extraordinary favour, and ſo may ſafely defer his Repentance, till he is ready to expire? No; this great Inſtance of Mercy in the crucified Malefactor, was given to prevent a true (tho late) Penitent from deſpairing; not to encourage any bold Sinner to *turn the Grace of God into Laſciviouſneſs* by his preſumption. And how many fatal inſtances might be given of the Vanity of ſuch hopes as theſe! How few of thoſe daring Sinners have arriv'd at the Time, which they pretended to devote to religious Purpoſes! How very few of thoſe that have reached old Age, have become ſenſible of their Guilt and Danger after a long Life ſpent in the Service of Sin! Have they not generally ſupinely doz'd away their laſt Moments (as they vainly ſpent their firſt) without awaking, till they have found themſelves in *everlaſting Burnings?* Or if they have receiv'd ſome Convictions of their Guilt, theſe have not always produc'd on them the Characters of *a Repentance to Salvation*, but have ſometimes fill'd their miſerable Souls with Deſpair and Horrour; and their former

Jude 4.

Iſa. 33. 14.

2 Cor. 7. 10.

deluſive Hopes of obtaining pardon at
Heb.10.27 the laſt hour, have only iſſued in *a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation to devour* them. Learn
Pſa.92.12. therefore, before it be too late, ſo *to number* your *Days as to apply* your *Hearts to Wiſdom!*

Will you, after all that has been ſaid, ſtill perſwade your ſelves, that 'tis yet time enough for you to remember your Creator; and that you may ſafely enough defer the ſecuring of your Salvation yet ſome time longer, if not quite to the evil Days of Old Age; that 'tis beſt for you firſt to eſtabliſh your ſelves in the World, as firmly as you can, and to make proviſion for your temporal Intereſt; and afterwards at your leiſure to think on the Affairs of another Life?

Theſe things have been alſo ſufficiently anſwer'd before; let me further add, That as your Time is very uncertain on the one hand, ſo your Reſolutions are yet more fickle on the other: For how common a thing is it for Men to aſſume a purpoſe of Repentance, and preſently to relinquiſh it again! How often do they violate their Promiſes to God and to themſelves, while they are perpetually fix-

fixing a new future ſeaſon of Amendment! So *deceitful is the Heart of Man, and ſo deſperately wicked, who can know it?* Jer. 17. 9.

And how prepoſterous is the Courſe you take, to endeavour to provide for your *Bodies* before your *Souls*, and to ſecure your *Temporal* before your *Eternal* Intereſt: Hearkening rather to the deluding Suggeſtions of *the Father of Lies*, who tempts you with the gilded Vanities of this periſhing World, than to the Counſel of him who is *Wiſdom* it ſelf, who adviſes you to *ſeek firſt the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs*; and aſſures you that then *the things* of this World (*i. e.* ſo far as may conduce to your Welfare) *ſhall be ſuperadded?* Joh. 8. 44. 1 Cor. 1. 24. Mat. 5. 31, 32, 33.

Since therefore your Creator requires your preſent Time, 'tis your Prudence, your Intereſt, and your Duty, without *conferring with Fleſh and Blood, immediately to obey* him; to *ſeek him, while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near*, and while he calls upon you; leſt if you perſiſt to ſlight and forget your Maker and his Counſel any longer, he ſhould ſo *remember your Iniquity and viſit your Sins*, as to pronounce on you Gal. 1. 16. Pſal. 32. 6. Iſ. 145. 18 Hoſ. 8. 13, 14.

Prov. 1. 24—32. this dreadful Sentence. *Because I have call'd and ye refus'd, I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded: But ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would none of my Reproof: I also will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh: When your fear cometh as Desolation, and your destruction cometh as a Whirl-wind: When Distress and Anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledg, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my Counsel, they despised all my Reproof: Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own Way, and be fill'd with their own Devices: For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of Fools shall destroy them.* How will you bear such a dismal Sentence as this? O with what Terrour will it strike your guilty Souls, especially when you are under the Apprehensions of approaching Death, or bowed down under the burden of Age! *What will* you Psal. 49. 5. *do in those Days of Evil, when the Iniquity of your Heels shall compass* you *about?* Job 20. 11 *When* your *Bones will be full of the Sin of* your

your *Youth, which ſhall lie down with* you *in the Duſt?* When the Terrours of God ſhall ſtrike your Conſciences, and all your paſt Life ſhall accuſe and condemn you? When *the Heaven ſhall reveal* your *Iniquity, and the Earth ſhall riſe up againſt* you? *When* your *Fleſh upon you ſhall have pain, and* your *Souls within you ſhall mourn? Tho Wickedneſs be* now *ſweet in your Mouths, and* you therefore *hide it under your Tongues*; *tho* you *ſpare it, and forſake it not, but keep it ſtill within* your *Mouths*; yet its luſcious Taſte *ſhall be turn'd into bitterneſs in* your *Bowels, and into the Gall of Aſps within you.* Is it not better to repent early than to be reduc'd to mourn deſpairingly, when 'tis too late? When the Almighty ſhuts out your Prayers, and when *a fire is kindled in his Anger, that will burn to the loweſt Hell*; *when he that made* you *will not have mercy on* you, *and he that form'd* you *will ſhew* you *no favour?* If once that dreadful Day overtakes you, each of you will then lament his Folly with the ſaddeſt Accents of Sorrow and Anguiſh, and turn upon himſelf with indignation and fury, ſaying, *How have I hated inſtruction, and my Heart deſpis'd reproof!*

Job 20. 27
Job 14. 22.
Job 20. 12, 13, 14.
Deut. 32. 22.
Iſa. 27. 11.
Prov. 5. 12, 13.

And have not obey'd the Voice of my Teachers, nor inclin'd mine Ear to them that instructed me! And bewail himself (as our Blessed Lord did *Jerusalem*, when he wept over that unhappy City) crying,

Luke 19. 42. *O that* I *had known, even* I, *in* that *my Day, the things that belonged unto* my *peace, but now they are hid from* mine *Eyes.*

Psa. 50. 22. *Now consider this ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.*

If you now begin to entertain serious Thoughts of Religion, to stir you up further to this great (tho miserably neglected) Duty of *remembering your Creator in the Days of your Youth*, let me entreat you to consider two or three things,

1. That God has been often pleas'd to dignify them with special Marks of Honour in his Church, who have honour'd him by the early dedication of their Youth to his Service, and has render'd their Services as eminent in the World, as their Piety has been early and exemplary.

Gen. 37. 2, 3, 4. As the forward Piety of *Joseph* kept him uncorrupt in his tender Years amidst the evil Examples of his envious *Brethren*;

thren; ſo he was bleſſed with the largeſt ſhare in the Affection of his aged *Father*: And tho his Zeal for their Reformation render'd him the Object of their *Hatred*, (as well as of his Father's *Love*) yet the Divine Providence wonderfully Gen. 39. 2,3,4,5,6. proſper'd him, and gave him favour in that ſtrange Countrey, whither their unnatural Malice had exil'd him. And as he there preſerved his Chaſtity when v. 7—20. it was try'd after ſo extraordinary a manner, that it was become impoſſible for him to keep himſelf *Innocent* without incurring the *Odium* of being reputed *Guilty*, as well as enduring other ſevere Puniſhments: So the Purity of his untainted Soul (who rather choſe to be accounted Vile than to be ſo) was afterwards ſtrangely clear'd up by the Wiſe and Gracious Providence of the Almighty; and his injur'd Name celebrated with the higheſt Honours of the Gen. 41. Court of *Egypt*: The Juſt and Holy God whom he ſerv'd, having endow'd him with a Prophetick Gift of interpreting Dreams; and by that Divine Skill open'd a way for his advancement from Priſon to ride in the ſecond Chariot of the Kingdom. So that he became a

Prince

Prince and a *Father* to that Nation whither he was brought a *Stranger* and a *Slave*; and proved the happy Instrument not only of preserving Multitudes of People from the Rage of a tedious Famine of seven Years continuance, but
Gen. 43. & Ch. 44. also of nourishing his Father's Family in that time of common Calamity. And by this means he had the honour of the most obsequious Addresses of those very Brethren of his that had been his Perse-
Ch. 45. cutors, and at last had the God-like Pleasure of melting them into a deep Conviction of the unreasonableness of their Enmity against him, by the most endearing Caresses, and sweetest expressions of Brotherly Love and Tenderness, and the satisfaction of that truly generous and innocent kind of Revenge, of
Rom. 12. 21. *overcoming Evil with Good.* Thus God was pleas'd to reward the eminent Piety of his Youth, by making him the Darling of his Providence; and to lay the foundation of his Glory in those Sufferings which were the proof of his Vertue.

Samuel, a young Votary to the Service of God in his Tabernacle, as he
1 Sam. 2. 25. grew up, became the Favorite both *of God and Men*: So eminently was he anointed

anointed with the Spirit of Prophecy, and that in a Time, when *the Word of the* LORD *was very precious*, that *all* Iſrael *from* Dan, *even to* Beerſheba, *knew that he was eſtabliſhed a Prophet of the* LORD. 1 Sam. 3. 1. 1 Sam. 3. 19, 20.

That Piety which ſeaſon'd the tender Years of *David*, render'd him (according to his Name) ſo *BELOVED* both of God and Men, that God was pleas'd to fill him with a Prophetick Spirit; and both God and Men thought good to chooſe him to wear a Regal Diadem. The ſupreme Ruler and Arbiter of the World, was pleas'd to reward his forward Zeal for Him, by raiſing him from the *Fold* to the *Throne*, and by making him exchange his Shepherd's *Crook* for a Royal *Scepter*: ſo that from a *Feeder of Sheep* he became both the *Prophet* and *King* of a mighty Nation; *the ſweeteſt Pſalmiſt*, and moſt valiant Prince of *Iſrael*. דויד à דוד *Dilectus.* 1 Sam. 17. 33, 42, 56. 2 Sam. 23. 1.

Religious *Joſiah*, who began to reform *himſelf* at *Eight* Years old, and to reform the *People* under his Government before he had exceeded *Twelve*, was honour'd of God with the happy accompliſhment of that glorious Reformation 2 Chron. 34. 3.

Ver. 8. mation in the Kingdom of *Judah*, when he could scarce write himself Man, having seen the Light but *Eighteen* Years, and had the earliness of his Piety signa-
v. 23—28. liz'd by the *Delay* of those Judgments that *Jerusalem* was threaten'd with, till the expiration of his Religious Reign: God was pleas'd to honour his early Zeal with a peculiar protection given for a Time to the Nation under his Conduct, for his sake; and would not fill his Reign that was so famous for his Piety, with those Scenes of Horrour and Misery, which darken'd the Times of his unhappy Successors. The Divine Compassion would not suffer him to see that City *stain'd* with the Blood of its Inhabitants, which he had been so industrious to *purge* from Superstition, and from the Worship of Idols. And as his *Life* was honourable to himself, and of the greatest advantage to his
2 Chron. 35. 24, 25, 26, 27. Subjects; so his *Death* was attended with their solemn and universal mourning, (an Honour which was refus'd to his profane *Successor*) and his Funeral celebrated with the *Lamentations* of a great Prophet; and his Memory preserv'd fresh and eternally fragrant in the

the ſacred Hiſtory of the Kings of *Judah*.

As *John* the *Baptiſt* firſt devoted his Youth to the pious Meditations of a *retir'd* Life, and then to the *publick* Service of God in his Generation: So he was inveſted with the honorary Title of *MESSENGER* to the *Meſſiah*, to prepare the way before him; who ſays, he was not only *a Prophet*, but *much more than a Prophet*; and that *among thoſe that had been born of Women, there was no greater Prophet* than he. Luke 1.80. Luke 3. 2, 3, 4. Luke 7. 26, 27, 28.

The early Piety of *Timothy*, who was well acquainted with the *Holy Scriptures* from his Childhood, was honoured with the moſt endearing Love of the great *Apoſtle* of the *Gentiles*, and with an eminent Station in the Church of God, wherein his prudent and Religious Deportment ſecur'd his *Youth* from *Contempt*; and made the Apoſtle give him that ſingular *Character*, to the *Philippians*, when he aſſures them that he had *no Man like-minded*, *who* would *naturally care for* their *State*. 2 Tim. 3. 15. 1 Tim. 4. 12. Philip. 2. 20.

The *beloved Diſciple* is reported to have been very young, when proſelyted to the Doctrine of Chriſt; and perhaps this John 13. 23.

this was not the leaſt occaſion of his being made the Boſom-friend of his Divine Maſter.

Nay, moſt of thoſe who were dignified with the ſacred Office of *Apoſtleſhip*, ſeem to have been converted in the Flower of their Time, by ſeveral Circumſtances of their Hiſtory in the Goſpel, and by the many Years ſome of them ſpent in Travels, and other hard Services and Sufferings, after the Aſcenſion of our Saviour.

On the contrary we find not like Inſtances of Perſons being call'd to ſuch eminent Services for God, and receiving ſuch *diſtinguiſhing* Marks of Honour from him in old Age, after a flagitious Life, almoſt quite waſted in the ſordid Drudgery of Sin.

What a generous Emulation then ſhould theſe illuſtrious *Examples*, we have mentioned, kindle in the Breaſts of you that are Young! With what an Holy Ambition ſhould they inſpire you, to become the early *Candidates* of Religion! Who knows in what eminent Services it may pleaſe your Maker to employ you? And who knows what ſignal Favours and Tokens of his Divine

vine Love, he may confer on you, if you conſecrate to him the *firſt* of your Strength, and the *beſt* of your Time?

But the Example, which of all others ſhines with the greateſt *Glory*, and communicates the ſweeteſt *Influence*, that is moſt capable both of raiſing your *Wonder*, and of exciting your *Imitation*, is that of our Bleſſed *Redeemer*, who came into the World to teach us by his *Life*, as well as to ſave us by his *Death*: He was pleas'd to honour the *Youthful* ſtate of Life by paſſing through it, *in the Days of his Fleſh*, while he dwelt with Men, and did not defer his Father's Work to *old Age* (a Stage of Life, which he never vouchſaf'd to enter on;) in his very Childhood *he wax'd ſtrong in Spirit, was filled with Wiſdom, and the Grace of God was upon him.* His *Soul* advanc'd in Divine *Knowledg*, as his *Body* did in *Stature*, and ſo he *grew in favour with God and Man.* At *Twelve* Years of Age he was found reaſoning with the *Jewiſh* Doctors in the Temple, with that *Senſe* and Underſtanding that amaz'd all the Auditors, and with that *Zeal* that became him, who made it his Delight to be *about his Father's Buſineſs.*

Heb. 5. 7.

Luk. 2. 40.

Ver. 52.

Ver. 42, 45, 47.

Ver. 49.

All

All the time he liv'd amongſt Men may be properly enough call'd the Time of *Youth*, for there's reaſon to conclude from his Hiſtory in the Goſpel, that he accompliſh'd the whole of his Work before he was advanc'd much beyond *Thirty* Years. And what a glorious Example does his ſhort Life preſent us, a Life without ſpot or blemiſh, without the leaſt ſign of any inclination to Sin, without the leaſt ſhew of Injuſtice or Uncharitableneſs towards *Men*, or the leaſt appearance of Diſobedience or Indevotion towards *God:* Nay, a Life ſpent in the greateſt Acts of *Charity* to Mankind, and in the higheſt Elevations of *Piety* to his Father: A Life that *conſum'd* it ſelf
Joh. 2.17. in the *Zeal of his Houſe*; that expir'd in a Sacrifice to the *Glory* of God, and for the *Salvation* of the Souls of Men.

So that you have not only the *Precept*, but the *Preſcription* too of your Creator to engage you in your Duty. He by whom you were *made*, by whom you are *preſerv'd*, by whom alone you can be *reſtor'd* from a ſtate of Sin, and by whom you muſt be finally *judg'd*, was pleas'd to aſſume humane Nature, to be
Heb. 2.17. made Man *in all things* (Sin only excepted)

cepted) on purpose to exemplify the Duty in our Text by his *Life*, as well as to conquer Sin and Hell by his *Death*. And since he calls you to *learn of him*, to bear *the Yoke* to which he meekly condescended to bow his own sacred Neck, in his tender Years, surely *'tis good* for you to stoop to that *Yoke in your Youth* too. Ought you not to apply your selves as well to his *Example* for Direction, as to his *Sufferings* for Salvation? And is it not both for your Honour and Interest to be conformable to that blessed Life, that was first *taken up* to instruct you, and then *laid down* to redeem you?

Mat. 11. 28 29, 30. Lam. 3. 27.

2. Consider how small that Oblation is, which is requir'd of your hands, when your *whole* Life is claim'd as the Right of your Creator; seeing 'tis but a *part* of it, that can be directly and immediately offer'd to him. The *Secular* Affairs that the Necessities of your Bodies engage you in, and *Sleep* together with the other Reparations of Nature that are requisite to make those frail Tabernacles Tenantable, di-

vide between 'em so *great* a share of the Time of Life, that 'tis but a *little* portion of it that can be allotted to Pious Exercises, how soon soever you apply your selves to the practice of 'em; and will you grudg your Maker this small *share* of your Time, for the *whole* of which you entirely depend on him? Can you think much to allow a part of every day to Devotion, to the immediate Service of God, and for the Welfare of your Souls, when he allows you so large a part of your Time to provide for the present Ease and Welfare of your Bodies, in procuring them the Conveniencies of Life? Is it not more reasonable to grudg that these Houses of Clay should have so *much* of your Care and Time, and that your Souls, nay, and your Creator should have so *little* of them? And ought you not rather to study how to improve even that Time which you spend in supporting and accommodating this animal Life, so as to render it subservient to the great Ends of honouring your Maker, and of saving your Souls, than to contrive Excuses for entirely squandering away the *best* part of that *little* Time in

Vanity

Vanity and *Sin*, which you ought to devote to the Holy Exerciſes of *Piety* and *Religion*?

And (once again) can you think you ſhall bring an acceptable Sacrifice, if after the conſumption of the *prime* of your Days in Vanity, you ſhould come to offer only ſome of your *laſt* hours to your Creator? Will the Days, in which you will confeſs you *have no Pleaſure* your ſelves, be a proper Offering for him to take pleaſure in? Is it fit to reſerve only the Blind and Lame and Sick for ſacred Services? May not ſuch a Return be reaſonably expected to every ſuch Oblation, as God by the Prophet *Malachi* makes to the profane *Jews* in another caſe; *Offer it now to thy Governor, will he be pleas'd with thee, or accept thy Perſon? ſaith the* LORD *of Hoſts.* Would you not have reaſon to fear that ſuch nauſeous Services would be caſt back as *Dung upon your Faces*? And that you would have an Anſwer ſomewhat like that, which you may imagine a Subject would receive, who after having waſted his

Mal. 1. 8.

Mal. 2. 3.

Youth and Strength in bearing Arms against his Soveraign, should come on Crutches in his Old Age to tender himself to be listed under his Banner? Such a kind of Answer, I say, as such an inveterate Rebel might expect; but as much more terrible as it is a greater Crime to sin against the great Creator than to offend a Creature, and as the Resentments of the *Living God* are more dreadful than the Anger of a *Mortal Man*.

3. To conclude, Consider whether the *largest* Portion of that little Time, which you can possibly spend in the Service of God here, makes any figure, when compar'd with an *Eternity* to be employ'd in the pleasant Contemplation and Enjoyment of him hereafter. Can you think much to dedicate the few Moments God is pleas'd to lend you in *this* World to him, who will reward the Service of those Moments with everlasting Bliss in the *next*, among those Blessed Ones, whose *Happiness* as well as *Business* it is to be perpetually devoted to the Service of their Maker;

ker; who enjoy Immortal *Youth*, and feel an unconceivable Pleaſure in employing it *wholly* in the Contemplation of his Perfections, in the Celebration of his Praiſes, in the entire Performance of his Will, and in the perfect Enjoyment of his Favour?

Can it be thought that any of thoſe Bleſſed Spirits that are poſſeſſed of this Glory, can think much that they ſpent a little Time here below to obtain it? May it not rather be ſuppos'd that they all unanimouſly wiſh (if ſuch a Wiſh be conſiſtent with that perfect State of Bliſs) that they had improv'd every Minute of that little Time which their Creator allotted them in this World, to his Glory? 'Tis not to be doubted, that the Holy Angels and Saints in Heaven do inceſſantly worſhip and ſerve their Maker with the greateſt Alacrity imaginable, becauſe they conſtantly behold his Face, and are always enamour'd of his Glory: They are under a continual impreſſion of the Reaſonableneſs

bleness and Goodness of his Will, and know perfectly well that their own Excellency and Happiness consists in their exact Conformity to it; and accordingly they find unexpressible Delights in doing his Pleasure: And if they count not an Eternity *too much* for the Service of their Creator, can you think the short Time of your sojourning here below *too large* an Offering for him?

Seeing then the Law of your *Creation*, and the Dictates of *Reason*; the Importunities of the Divine *Word*, and the Warnings of the Holy *Spirit*; the *Command* of your Maker, and the *Example* of your Redeemer; the *Experience* of the Saints on *Earth*, and the unanimous *Sense* of the Saints and Angels too in *Heaven*; together with your own highest *Interest* both in Time and Eternity, do all conspire to oblige you to devote the *first* and *best* of your Time to the great Author of your *Being*: How can you any longer refuse to give up your YOUTH to be tied by these many sacred Bonds

Psal. 118. 27.

as

as a Sacrifice to the Horns of his Altar?

Behold NOW is the accepted Time; Behold NOW is the Day of Salvation. Therefore *to Day, if you will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts.* 2 Cor. 6. 2. Psal. 95. 7, 8. Heb. 3. 7, 8.

FINIS.